PATTERNS OF POWER

Italian Eritrea

The Complete Study

1869 — 1890 — 1941

Thomas J. Bryan

with Claude/Anthropic

Held as tested, not revealed.

CONTENTS

Preface	PREFACE AND OUTLINE
Landscape	SIX NAMES FOR A CHIEF
Module 1	MORE SUITABLE AND LESS COSTLY
Module 2	THE FIELDS THEY CAME BACK TO
Module 3	THE FIRST-BORN
Module 4	THE NAMES OF THOSE WHO MADE ITALY GREAT
Module 5	WHY THEY DID NOT WALK AWAY
Module 6	THE ONLY CROP THAT PAID
Module 7	ONE VERB, TWO EMPIRES
Module 8	SIXTY-SIX OFFICERS
Module 9	THE CATEGORY THEY ERASED
Module 10	THE FLOOR THAT DID NOT DESERT
Module 11	THE NOTE NO ONE MEANT TO CALL
Module 12	THE BORDER THAT BECAME A NATION

PREFACE

PREFACE AND OUTLINE

Front matter — how this study was made, the disciplines it holds itself to, and a map of its fourteen parts.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

The collaboration

This is a case study in the Patterns of Power series, applying the series' framework to the Colony of Eritrea, from the accidental purchase of the bay of Assab in 1869 to the collapse of Italian rule before a British army in 1941, with the account carried forward where the record requires it — to the racial laws of the late 1930s, and to the sovereign Eritrea that the colony's border eventually became. The framework is a lens for reading how any order of power is founded, dressed, and held: the floor of force beneath every order, the robe of doctrine laid over the floor to make the force cheap, the settlement that divides the spoils, the cost column in which each subject prices defection, the seam that manages the belief on which the whole depends, the default by which an elite coordinates without instruction, and — running through all of it — the recursion by which the order a conqueror finds is never a baseline but a former conquest naturalised until it has become the way the world simply is.

Eritrea was chosen for three reasons, and each turned out to do work the collection could not have got elsewhere.

The first is that it is the corpus's clearest case of a rented floor — a colony whose coercive apparatus was recruited almost entirely from the conquered, nine-tenths of the men under arms drawn from the country they held down. That lets the study test, at the limit, the framework's law that orders fall only from above: if a floor staffed by the ruled were ever going to be a colony's fatal weakness, it would be here, and instead the rented floor held for fifty years and then died three-to-one holding the colony against its conquerors. Co-optation, in this case, is not a technique laid over the floor. It is the floor.

The second is that it is the one case in the collection where the native order defeated the coloniser's army in the field. Across the Mereb river stood not a fragmented march that could be rented piecemeal but the Solomonic empire of Ethiopia — a former conquest naturalised over a millennium until every prince defended the whole as his own — and it destroyed an Italian army at Adwa in 1896 and compelled Italy to recognise its independence. That lets the recursion at the heart of this project be tested against a native order that met a European floor at full strength and broke it, which no other case permits.

The third is that this colony produced nothing worth extracting and ran at a loss for fifty years, so that its true export was not a crop or a mineral but its men — recruited to hold it and then spent conquering Libya, Somalia, and, in 1935, the Ethiopia that had beaten it. A colony whose only profitable product was the soldier, paid for in lire and in graves, is the corpus's sharpest specimen of extraction that does not appear in a trade ledger, and its clearest demonstration that the floor a colony rents and the harvest it sells can be one and the same population.

The method

Its engine throughout is the method of information asymmetry: setting the exact public words beside the exact words of the ground and letting the distance speak. A minister's pledge to the Chamber in 1882 that Italians would come not as rulers but as friends to their new fellow-citizens, beside the racial law of 1937 that made a marriage between an Italian and one of those fellow-citizens a crime. A treaty of friendship whose seventeenth article, in Italian, made Ethiopia a protectorate and, in Amharic, left it sovereign — one verb carrying two empires' claims. A director of education's instruction that the Eritrean pupil should learn, of all human history, only the names of the men who made Italy great. A minister's boast that the keys of the Mediterranean lay in the Red Sea, beside the memoir of a prime minister who noted that Italy never found them there. The study lays out the arithmetic and leaves the sum to the reader. It does not preach the conclusion.

Two limitations are structural and are stated here rather than buried. The first is documentary. A large part of this record exists only in Italian and in Amharic and Tigrinya, much of it in colonial administrative Italian and in Ge'ez-script sources this study could reach only at one remove; several load-bearing texts are flagged in their sources notes as seen only through a reproduction and needing collation against originals — among them the founding land decree of 1893, the two proclamations attributed to

Bahta Hagos, the exact Ge'ez wording of the Amharic text of Article 17 of the Treaty of Wuchale, and the fuller civilising-mission rhetoric of Crispi and of Governor Martini, whose own words would sharpen the study's account of the robe and which it has quoted only where verified. The second is that Eritrea has never held a full census, so that its ethnic and religious proportions, its population before 1900, and the human mortality of the famine that opened the period are given as ranges and orders of magnitude throughout.

The disciplines

Five rules govern every module.

Quotation. Public-domain primary sources — laws, decrees, treaties, parliamentary records, official despatches, memoirs — are quoted exactly, in the original and with a translation, at the length the argument needs, because in a legal fiction the precise wording is the evidence. Modern copyrighted scholarship is paraphrased, briefly, and credited.

No fabrication. No quotation, date, attribution, or figure is ever invented or reconstructed from memory. What cannot be verified is dropped or flagged, never guessed — and this case has many such flags, from the Amharic verb of Wuchale to the words of Bahta Hagos. Contested figures are given as ranges: the Assab purchase price, the illiteracy and emigration figures, the dead at Dogali and at Keren, the hectares expropriated, the count of the killings admitted to the 1891 commission, and, above all, the mortality of the great famine, which rests on no census and is given as an order of magnitude only.

Gravity without partisanship. Suffering is held with gravity, and the study refuses both flattery and demonisation — it names the legal fiction as fiction and explains the order's logic without excusing it. Its recurring watchword is that legibility is not pardon, and it holds that naming the conquered origin of a beloved thing is never the same as debunking the thing.

Contribution. Every module returns a refinement to the framework, stated plainly in its closing section, rather than merely applying the framework to the case.

Held as tested, not revealed. The pattern is treated as something discovered and tested against the evidence, not handed down as doctrine — a lens laid over the record, a

tendency and never a law. Where the evidence overturned an earlier finding of this same study, the reversal was made in the open rather than concealed.

The contribution

Chief among the refinements the study returned to the framework: that where a conqueror can afford neither to install his belief nor to garrison the ground himself, co-optation ceases to be a technique laid over the floor and becomes the floor, so that the diagnostic question is what proportion of the force holding the ground was recruited from it; that the thick/thin gradient needs a second axis, alignment — whether the belief a population holds points at the floor that stands over it — because a thickly formed people whose belief is misaligned with its floor is the cheapest conquest available, needing no robe but only a wage and the removal of a resented overlord; that dispossession tends to elimination only where the settler actually arrives, so that a stock-taking is a bet on the metropole's willingness to emigrate to that particular colony, and where the bet fails the coloniser converts from taking the land to taking the men; that a colony can be held at a permanent loss without being unextracted, the loss being the cost of producing a resource — soldiers — that the metropole consumes rather than sells, so that one must read what a colony counts to see what it means to take, and this one counted its soldiers and not its taxpayers; that withheld formation is not neglect but a positive act and the clearest single tell of a colonial order, since an order withholds formation only because to form the subject fully would be to admit him; that a native counter-formation need not resist but can simply occupy the ground the coloniser declines to enter, holding the field by walkover; that of the four terms of the compliance ledger the exit column is the one on which the coloniser's power differs most sharply between subject and citizen, so that a colony flows toward whichever population the ruler can deny an exit to; that a fiction aimed outward at a peer state obeys the reverse of the rule governing the domestic robe and is the most fragile fiction an order can hold, collapsing the moment the peer can read and answer it; that an order engineers the default among its intermediaries by capping every subject slot rather than satisfying its ambition, keeping the arrangement unseizable by its own middle at the cost of a floor that defends it only for pay; that the recursion which makes a fragmented order cheap to rent makes a fused one impossible to conquer, because the fusion that resists the conqueror is an elite-coordination arrangement that has solved the default at the level of its great men; that liberties are the residue of factional

bargains, so a caste kept without standing accretes none, and that foreclosure has an active mode — the abolition by law of an emergent category before it can harden into a faction; that even an order whose entire coercive apparatus is drawn from the subject population is not overthrown from below, but that such a rented floor cannot outlive its paymaster by a day; that a conquest's largest effects, for good and ill alike, are frequently the ones it did not intend — the plague it carried in and the nation it accidentally framed — so that an accounting by intention misjudges it in both directions; and, finally, that the naturalisation which makes an order cheap and launders its costs also manufactures its strongest defence, the retroactive legitimacy of a beloved nation offered as a licence for the founding, which must be met not by disputing that conquests build beloved things but by refusing the inference from beloved to justified, on the ground that eventually is not the same as therefore.

The arc

A landscape opening and twelve modules, each with a framework function and its own evocative title.

Landscape — the three orders on the eve of conquest. Six Names for a Chief. An unmade Italy buying a bay by accident; a shatter zone where four former conquests had ground against each other and none had wholly taken; and a Solomonic throne whose robe had gone so deep it would destroy a European army — and the first statement of the variable the study isolates, that the conqueror does not choose his method but has it chosen for him by the shape of the order he finds.

1 — The Floor of Force. More Suitable and Less Costly. A port handed over by Britain, an army bought from an Albanian mercenary, an incumbent killed by other men's hands, and a plateau entered while its emperor lay dead and its people starved — and the finding that where a conqueror is too poor to build a floor, he can rent one from the people he is conquering.

2 — The Settlement. The Fields They Came Back To. A decree making the whole colony Crown land, four hundred thousand hectares taken while their owners starved elsewhere, thirty families to put on them, and the client chief who turned when the land was taken — and the finding that dispossession tends to elimination only where the settler actually arrives.

3 — The Robe. The First-Born. A liberal parliament's promise of fellow-citizens, a colony named the first-born of a nation not yet sure it was one, and the hardest thing this robe ever had to do — explain to its own believing public why the people it had come to civilise had just destroyed its army in the field.

4 — Formation. The Names of Those Who Made Italy Great. A school stopped at the fourth grade by design, a curriculum teaching the pupil only the names of great Italians, and a thousand-year-old Christian formation left in full possession of the highland because the colony declined to compete for its soul.

5 — The Cost Column. Why They Did Not Walk Away. The four-term ledger of compliance run for two men — the Eritrean whose belief in the Italian order was never grown and who complied anyway, and the Italian whose belief was courted and who emigrated regardless — and the finding that the one column the empire could set for the African and not the Italian was the exit.

6 — Extraction. The Only Crop That Paid. A colony that ran at a loss for fifty years and declined to count its subjects because it did not mean to tax what they grew — it meant to recruit what they were — and the finding that its true export was its men, spent conquering the wars that justified the garrison.

7 — Information & Suppression. One Verb, Two Empires. A treaty declared to agree perfectly in two languages that did not, one permissive verb in Amharic and one obligatory verb in Italian — and the finding that a fiction aimed outward at a peer state is the most fragile an order can hold, collapsing the moment its target can read and answer it.

8 — Elite Coordination & the Default. Sixty-Six Officers. A hierarchy in which each man defended the whole by defending his own slot, every native slot capped so no intermediary could grow into a threat — set against the throne across the Mereb that had bound its own quarrelsome princes so well it could bring men who hated each other to stand together in one line.

9 — Plurality or Foreclosure. The Category They Erased. A subject with no faction and therefore no liberty, and the one in-between category that began to accrete on its own — the children of mixed unions — abolished by law before it could harden into a constituency, the union criminalised and the child made evidence of the crime.

10 — Change & Collapse. The Floor That Did Not Desert. A colony ended not by the rising of the ruled but by an outside army in a war about Europe, its rented floor fighting and dying for Italy to the last ridge and deserting only after the empire that paid it was already destroyed.

11 — The Grim Accounting. The Note No One Meant to Call. Three columns kept apart — the harm the order chose, the city and the country it built, and a metabolic debt larger than both, a plague carried in with the garrison's cattle that killed a third of a region — and the finding that the gravest harm a conquest does is often the one no one decided.

12 — Convergence & Divergence. The Border That Became a Nation. What Eritrea shares with every conquest in the collection and what was singular to it — closing on the strongest case for the colony, that Italy made a nation where there had been only a shatter zone, credited in full and answered without flinching, because eventually is not the same as therefore.

Part of the collection Patterns of Power. Tested, never revealed.

LANDSCAPE

SIX NAMES FOR A CHIEF

The ground before the colony — an unmade nation buying a bay from a shipping company, a march that four conquests had written over and none had wholly taken, and a throne whose robe had gone so deep it would destroy a European army; and the first statement of the variable this study exists to isolate, that the conqueror does not choose his method but has it chosen for him by the shape of the order he finds.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

Why this case is read from three landscapes, and what the founding decree gives away

Every study in this collection begins by reconstructing the ground a conquest fell on — who held the floor of force, how the wealth was settled, what story the population had been formed to believe was rightful — so that the conquest can be read as an act performed against a real prior order rather than upon empty scenery. A colonial conquest doubles the requirement, because a colonial conqueror answers to an audience the conquered will never see: the land invaded and the land that invaded it must both be built. This case requires a third, and the third is the whole reason it was chosen. Between the Italy that came and the ground it took stood a state — the Solomonic empire of Ethiopia — that was neither the invader nor the invaded, that was at that very moment conducting a large conquest of its own, and that would, within six years of the colony's founding, destroy an Italian army in the field and compel Italy to recognise its independence. No other case in the corpus offers that: a native order which met a European floor at full strength and broke it.

The founding document of the colony gives the three landscapes away in a single clause, and it is worth setting down at the outset because everything that follows is an unpacking of it. Royal Decree no. 6592 of 1 January 1890, signed at Rome by Umberto I and countersigned by Francesco Crispi, gathered Italy's scattered Red Sea holdings into one administration. Its first article is four lines long: *I possedimenti italiani del Mar Rosso sono costituiti in una sola colonia col nome di Eritrea* — the Italian possessions of the Red Sea

are constituted into a single colony under the name of Eritrea. Its tenth article assigns the portfolio of the colonial councillor for agriculture and commerce, and the assignment reads, in part: *Il demanio pubblico; ... la sorveglianza delle strade carovaniere, il transito attraverso le diverse tribù; le relazioni con gli indigeni ed i loro capi, tanto all'interno che all'esterno della colonia, la scelta e conferma in ufficio dei sultani, naib, sceik, cadi, scium, kantibay, le trattative politiche con l'Etiopia* — the public domain; the supervision of the caravan roads, transit through the various tribes; relations with the natives and their chiefs, both within and beyond the colony, the choice and confirmation in office of the sultans, naibs, shaykhs, qadis, shums, kantibais, political negotiations with Ethiopia.

Read that list slowly, because it is the study in one sentence. Six different titles for a chief, drawn from four different orders — a sultan is a Muslim ruler of the Afar coast, a naib the hereditary Ottoman deputy of Massawa, a shaykh and a qadi the leader and the judge of Islamic tribal law, a shum an Abyssinian district officer of the Christian highland, a kantibai a chief of the Bilen and the northern hills — and the power to *choose and confirm* every one of them handed to a single Italian official, who holds it in the same portfolio as the land. Beside the land and the chiefs, in the same clause, sits the phrase *le trattative politiche con l'Etiopia*: political negotiations with Ethiopia, an ancient empire of some millions of people, filed under a colonial commercial desk. In one article Italy names the three things this study measures — the land it would take, the fragmentation it would purchase, and the throne it had catastrophically misjudged. Six years later the throne answered.

Landscape I — Italy: a nation not yet made, buying a bay

The Kingdom of Italy that reached the Red Sea was not the confident imperial power of the later legend, and reading it as one is the first error to refuse. It was eight years old when the bay was bought and twenty-nine when the colony was proclaimed, and its own formation was as thin as any metropole in this collection. Nearly seventy per cent of its people could not read at the census of 1871 — some sixty-two per cent of men and seventy-six per cent of women — and the great majority of them did not, in daily life, speak the language of the state that claimed them, but a regional tongue in which the word *Italia* named an idea rather than a home. Its first king had conducted the business of government largely in Piedmontese and French. It had, in the phrase of the period, made Italy and had still to make Italians. And by the 1880s its poorest were leaving it in

numbers that made the failure quantitative: in 1888 alone more than two hundred thousand Italians sailed for the Americas, roughly ten times the figure of a decade before. A state whose people were emigrating by the boatload was a state whose benefit column, at home, was conspicuously empty.

To that thinness was added, in 1881, a humiliation that Italian politics would not stop chewing for thirty years. Tunisia lay ninety miles from Sicily, held tens of thousands of Italian settlers against a few thousand French, and had been treated in Rome as an Italian expectancy. In April 1881 the French marched, and on 12 May the Bey signed the Treaty of the Bardo. Britain said nothing; Germany, which had quietly encouraged the move to point French ambition away from the Rhine, said nothing. Italy protested and did not fight, and the Italian press named the episode with a word it never surrendered: *lo schiaffo di Tunisi*, the slap of Tunis. Within a year Italy had signed the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary and had begun, for the first time, to want a colony — not because a colony would pay, but because a state that had just been slapped in public needed to be seen to be somewhere.

What it had to be somewhere with was a bay it had acquired by accident. On 15 November 1869 a Genoese Lazarist priest turned government agent, Giuseppe Sapeto, acting for the Rubattino shipping company, concluded an agreement with two brothers, the sultans Hasan and Ibrahim ibn Ahmad, for a strip of some eighteen square kilometres on the Danakil coast around the Bay of Assab, at a price of six thousand Maria Theresa thalers — the deal later enlarged and refinanced, and settled at a figure usually given as around eight thousand three hundred and fifty. Two days after the signature, the Suez Canal opened. The coincidence is not decoration: a fishing village of perhaps a hundred souls and twenty huts, worth almost nothing on the Thursday, sat on the shipping lane of the world on the Saturday, and the whole of Italian East Africa grew from that accident of timing. For a decade nobody in Rome quite knew what to do with it. Rubattino left it unused; the press attacked the purchase; the Egyptians, who claimed the coast, protested. Then in 1882 the government took it over — a law of 5 July 1882, following a bill laid before the Chamber on 26 June by the foreign minister Pasquale Stanislao Mancini, redeeming the concession from the company for a sum given as around four hundred and sixteen thousand lire — and Italy had, without ever having decided to want one, a colony.

Mancini's speech introducing that bill is the first robe of this study, and it should be quoted at the length it deserves, because it is the pledge against which everything the

colony later did will be set. He hoped the possession would *giovare alle sorti avvenire della nostra Marina, del nostro commercio e dello sviluppo economico d'Italia* — serve the future fortunes of our Navy, our commerce, and the economic development of Italy. And as to the people whom Italian sovereignty was about to cover, he told the Chamber that Italians would come as *non dominatori, non tutori, non innovatori, ma amici ed aiutatori a guidare i nostri nuovi concittadini a miglioramenti compresi e desiderati* — not rulers, not guardians, not innovators, but friends and helpers, guiding our new fellow-citizens toward improvements understood and desired. *I nostri nuovi concittadini.* Our new fellow-citizens. The word is *concittadini*, and it was spoken in the chamber of a liberal parliament by a jurist who was, in his own field, a serious and sincere theorist of the rights of nations. Hold it. Fifty-six years later the same state would criminalise sexual union between an Italian and an Eritrean and legislate on the status of the children; the schools it built for its new fellow-citizens would be capped, by design, at the lowest grades; and the finest street in the capital it raised would be a street on which they could not live. The arithmetic between those two facts is the study. It is laid out here and left, as the method requires, for the reader to do the sum.

The second thing to see in the Italian landscape is who the robe was cut for, and the answer is the ordinary answer of the colonial bend, stated once for this case and then relied on. In an ordinary order the floor and the belief lie over the same population: force holds the ground, and a believed story is laid over that same ground to make the holding cheap. In a colony they come apart by distance. The floor operates in the colony; the robe is cut for the metropole. The governor at Massawa did not need the Tigrinya peasant to think him rightful, because the peasant's belief bought him nothing his rifles did not already secure, and force never pays for what it does not need. What he needed was the belief of the deputy voting the credits, the taxpayer funding the expedition, and above all the conscript's family in Bergamo or Calabria who had to think the thing worth a son. So when Mancini rose on 27 January 1885, in the weeks Italian troops were landing at Massawa, to answer members who complained that the Red Sea was a distraction from Italy's real theatre, the speech he gave was aimed at no African at all:

> *Voi temete ancora che la nostra spedizione nel Mar Rosso ci distolga da quello che chiamate il vero e importante obiettivo della politica italiana, che deve essere il Mediterraneo. Ma perché invero non volete riconoscere che nel Mar Rosso, il più*

> *vicino al Mediterraneo, possiamo trovare le chiavi di quest'ultimo, la via che ci riconduce ad una efficace tutela contro ogni nuovo turbamento del suo equilibrio?*

>

> You still fear that our expedition in the Red Sea will divert us from what you call the true and important object of Italian policy, which must be the Mediterranean. But why in truth will you not recognise that in the Red Sea, the sea nearest the Mediterranean, we may find the keys to the latter — the road that leads us back to an effective safeguard against any new disturbance of its balance?

The keys of the Mediterranean lie in the Red Sea. It is a sentence with no content — a geographical impossibility offered to a chamber that wanted to be told that the slap of Tunis could be answered somewhere, anywhere — and it worked. Giovanni Giolitti, who was in that parliament and would run the country five times, wrote the epitaph on it forty years later in his memoirs, and the flatness of his prose is the whole of the information asymmetry in one line. Italy, he recalled, ended up going to Massawa *per fiche de consolation* — as a consolation prize; and Mancini, then foreign minister, *magnificò la cosa pronunciando la famosa frase, che le chiavi del Mediterraneo erano nel Mar Rosso, ma noi non ve le abbiamo mai trovate* — glorified the thing by uttering the famous phrase, that the keys of the Mediterranean were in the Red Sea; but we never found them there.

Two audiences, two coins, one floor. That is the reversed robe of the colonial bend, and in Italy's case it is reversed twice over, because the nation whose belief was being bought did not yet firmly believe in itself. The colony was not merely funded by the metropole's conviction; it was, in part, an instrument for manufacturing it.

Landscape II — the march: four conquests and no single seam

Now the ground. And here the framework's second discipline governs the reading, the one that says a conqueror never meets an aboriginal or timeless baseline, because the order he finds is itself a naturalised former conquest that already reached the self-running pole. What Italy found on this coast was not one such order. It was the place where several of them had been grinding against each other for a thousand years, and that fact — not any weakness in Italy's enemies, and certainly not any virtue in Italy — is the single variable that made Eritrea cheap and Libya ruinous.

The oldest layer the record reaches on this ground is the Aksumite kingdom, Christian from the fourth century, and beneath and beside it the Beja and Cushitic peoples of the hills and the western plain. Over the coast, from the eighth century, came Islam — early, and by sea rather than by army, through the Dahlak islands and the ports, so that by the tenth century Massawa and its hinterland were being described as Muslim. Into the highlands came the Christian Abyssinian state: after the Solomonic restoration of 1270 the northern plateau north of the Mareb river was organised as a province, called in Tigrinya *Medri Bahri*, the land of the sea, and in the imperial chronicles *Mereb Melash*, beyond the Mareb, governed by an officer whose title the emperor Zara Yaqob formalised in the fifteenth century — the *Bahr Negash*, the king of the sea. Then in 1557 the Ottomans took Massawa, made it the seat of the eyalet of Habesh, pushed inland, were pushed back, and settled for what a maritime empire could hold: the coast, the customs house, and a hereditary local deputy, the *naib*, to run the strip on their behalf. And in 1865 the Ottoman sultan handed the administration of that coast to the Khedive of Egypt, who held it until the Mahdist rising in the Sudan pulled his garrisons home and left the door open for Italy to walk through — which, with British encouragement and Egyptian consent, Colonel Tancredi Saletta's Special Corps for Africa did, without a shot, on 5 February 1885.

That is four conquests — Christian Abyssinian, Islamic, Ottoman, Egyptian — layered on a Cushitic and Beja substrate, and the crucial structural fact is that *none of them ever took the whole ground.* The Ottomans never held the plateau. The Abyssinians never held the coast for long. Islam never converted the highland. Christianity never held the lowland. The frontier between them was not a line but a zone, and the zone is what Italy would name Eritrea.

The human residue is a population of remarkable heterogeneity for so small a country: nine peoples by the modern reckoning — Tigrinya, Tigre, Saho, Afar, Bilen, Beja or Hedareb, Kunama, Nara, Rashaida — speaking Semitic, Cushitic and Nilo-Saharan languages, and divided almost exactly in half by faith, the Christian roughly half and the Muslim roughly half, the Christians overwhelmingly in the highland and the Muslims overwhelmingly in the lowlands and along the coast. And the fault ran deeper than a census line, because it had been actively widened by the retreat of one of the conquests. During the Ethiopian *Zemene Mesafint* — the Era of the Princes, conventionally 1769 to 1855, when the imperial throne at Gondar became a plaything of regional warlords and

twenty-three emperors passed across it in eighty-six years — Abyssinian imperial presence on the northern march thinned to almost nothing, and into that vacancy the Ottoman and Egyptian coast pressed upward, so that peoples who had been Christian, the Bilen and much of the Tigre, were islamised. The religious map Italy found in 1885 was not primordial. It was the tidemark of an imperial ebb.

And it was, at the base, a stratified order of its own, which the honest accounting must record and which the sentimental reading of any colonised people would rather not. In the western lowlands the Tigre-speaking cultivators and herdsmen stood in a relation of servile dependency to the Beni Amer nobility above them — the very word *Tigre* is glossed in the ethnographic literature as serf — and in the highlands the Christian Tigrinya peasant used, of the Kunama and Nara of the western plain, the word *bariya*, slave. This is not an argument for Italy. It is the framework's ordinary finding, which is that there is no first innocent order anywhere on the record, only earlier builds that took, and that the earlier builds were extracting from someone too.

But the point that governs everything downstream is the one about the highland, and it must be put precisely, because a careless version of it would be false. The Tigrinya of Hamasien, Seraye and Akele Guzai were not an unformed people. They were among the most thickly formed populations in this entire collection: Orthodox Christian since antiquity, their liturgy in Ge'ez, their year scored by fasts and saints' days of a calendar a millennium and a half old, their land held under the ancestral *rist* tenure of the Abyssinian highland and their church endowed from it, their kings descended in the sacred history from Solomon. Formation had done its full work on them. What had *not* happened was that this formation had come to point at the floor that stood over them. The floor over Mereb Melash in the 1880s was Tigrayan: Ras Alula Engida, appointed by the emperor Yohannes IV, who occupied the province in 1879 and imprisoned Woldemichael Solomon, the last of the Bahr Negash — a governor whose exactions on the highland Tigrinya are recorded in the scholarship as harsh enough that his memory is still contested across the modern border, hero on one side of the Mareb and oppressor on the other. Beneath him the plateau's own politics were a feud: the rival houses of Hazega and Tsazega, two villages within sight of what would become Asmara, had been contending for the leadership of Hamasien for the better part of a century and a half.

So the thing Italy walked into was not an absence of belief. It was a *misalignment* between a deeply installed belief and the floor that currently claimed the believers — a thickly

formed Christian peasantry whose sacred order had its apex in a distant capital, and whose immediate experience of that apex was a Tigrayan army living off their fields. A population like that is not thin. It is the cheapest population in the world to buy, and it will not need to be persuaded of anything at all, because what is on offer is not a creed but a wage and the removal of a resented overlord. In 1887, when Ras Alula blockaded Massawa from the landward side to strangle its trade, the Muslim merchants of the port — whose grain came up the same roads — shifted their sympathies toward the Italians, and the shift is recorded in the sources without anyone having to be converted to anything. That is the mechanism of this whole colony, visible before the colony existed.

Landscape III — Ethiopia: the conquest that became the world

Against the march stood the state, and it is the finest example in the corpus of what the framework calls a former conquest naturalised to the cheap pole — the point at which an order is no longer held up by anyone's force, because it has become the furniture of reality and the governed hold it up themselves, for free, and feel righteous doing it.

The Solomonic dynasty took the Ethiopian throne in 1270, when Yekuno Amlak overthrew the last of the Zagwe. That is a conquest; it is a usurpation by arms. What was laid over it is one of the most complete robes ever built. The *Kebra Nagast*, the Glory of Kings — a Ge'ez compilation of the fourteenth century, a hundred and seventeen chapters, manifestly composite, drawing on Coptic, Arabic and local material — tells how the Queen of Sheba came from Ethiopia to Solomon in Jerusalem, bore him a son, Menelik, and how that son returned bearing the Ark of the Covenant, so that the God of Israel departed from Zion and dwelt in Aksum, and the kings of Ethiopia are Solomon's line and the guardians of the Ark. Yekuno Amlak's seizure of power thereby ceased to be a seizure at all. It became a *restoration* — the recovery of an ancient right from illegitimate Zagwe interlopers — and the emperors from that day forward bore the style Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia.

Every element of *The Architect and the Inheritor* is visible in that text and should be named plainly. Yekuno Amlak was not a simpler creature of a credulous age; he was a man in a position, who needed something force alone could not give him, and who got behind a channel his people already trusted — the Church — and had it point at him. The text is layered because capable inheritors kept lodging their own changes in the founder's

authority rather than their own; the founder's stature grows across the centuries because a larger founder is a stronger currency for whoever can speak in his name; and none of this requires a single liar anywhere in the chain. By the nineteenth century no Ethiopian peasant experienced the Solomonic claim as a policy adopted for a purpose. He experienced it as the ground of the world. And that is precisely why it was load-bearing rather than decorative — why, when the priests carried the *tabot*, the replica of the Ark, onto the field at Adwa, they were not performing a ritual over an army, they *were* the reason the army was there. In Ethiopia the floor and the robe were the same order. That is the rarest configuration in this collection, and it is the reason the floor held.

Naming the Solomonic robe as built does not debunk it, and the discipline here is absolute. A thing that was built and then became real is more genuine and more durable than a lie could ever be, and the proof is not theoretical: this built thing beat a European army in the field, which no other native order in this corpus managed. It was authentically the Ethiopians' world, exactly as the Fascist order would later be authentically the settler's.

Two further facts complete the throne, and both cut against sentiment. The first is that the Ethiopian order knew exactly what it was holding off, and had a name for it. The *Zemene Mesafint* — that same Era of the Princes — was the Ethiopian default: the condition into which the empire fell whenever the imperial floor weakened and the regional *ras* came up, each with his own levies, to make and unmake figurehead emperors at Gondar. Tewodros II ended it by force in 1855 and set about recentralising; Yohannes IV held the coalition together as a suzerain among great lords rather than a monarch above them, and would die in March 1889 fighting the Mahdists at Metemma. The whole design of Ethiopian kingship — the sacred apex, the levies owed by the *ras*, the Church endowed from the land — is an answer to the open problem of holding capable, armed subordinates in a coalition, and the Era of the Princes is what happened every time the answer failed. That is Module 8 waiting to be written, and it is the reason Menelik's ability to bring the *ras* to Adwa was not a foregone conclusion but an achievement.

The second is that Ethiopia was, at the very moment Italy was conquering the march, *itself an expanding conqueror*. Menelik's southern campaigns — the *agar maqnat* — were running concurrently with the Italian wars, annexing the Oromo lands, Kaffa and the south into the empire, and they were conducted with the brutality that armed expansion is generally conducted with. Two conquests met at the Mareb, and both of them were conquests. That is not a defence of Italy; nothing in this study will be. It is the recursion,

and refusing to see it would make the study a partisan document rather than a structural one.

And the two conquests, appallingly, fed on the same catastrophe. In 1887 rinderpest entered the Horn through the Eritrean coast — the introduction is attributed in much of the literature to infected cattle imported to feed Italian troops at Massawa, and the attribution is probable rather than certain — and swept the highlands, killing something on the order of ninety per cent of the cattle of Ethiopia. Behind the cattle came drought and locusts, and behind those came the *Kefu Qen*, the evil days, the great famine of 1888 to 1892, whose human mortality is estimated at up to a third of the population and can never be known precisely. It shattered Ethiopia's capacity to hold the northern march, which is how Italy came up onto the plateau. It also shattered Oromo capacity to resist Menelik, which is how Menelik came down into the south. One epizootic; two empires fed. Whatever else the record of the Horn in these years is, it is not a morality play.

Reading the ground against the framework

Three findings, and one revision that this landscape returns to the framework and that the twelve modules will test.

First, the reversed robe, doubled. The colonial bend holds here exactly as it held for Algeria and Libya: the floor operates in the colony and the robe is cut for the metropole, because the conquered's belief buys the governor nothing that his rifles have not already bought, and force never pays for what it does not need. But Italy adds the second turn the Libya study named — a metropole whose own formation was thin, whose people could not read its language, and who were emigrating from it in hundreds of thousands. Mancini's keys of the Mediterranean were not sold to Eritreans; they were sold to a Chamber that needed to believe the slap of Tunis could be answered. The colony was, in part, a machine for manufacturing the nation that owned it.

Second, the recursion is not one layer deep but four. The framework says a conqueror meets a naturalised former conquest, never a baseline. This ground offers a harder case: it is where *several* former conquests met and none finished, and the map Italy inherited — Christian above, Muslim below, a Turkish deputy on the beach, an Egyptian garrison walking away — is the fossil of their contention.

Third, and this is the revision: the framework's thick/thin gradient measures how *deeply* a belief is installed in a population. Eritrea shows that a second axis is needed, and that the two are independent. Call it *alignment*: whether the belief a population actually holds points at the floor that actually stands over it. The Tigrinya highlander of 1885 was thickly formed — Orthodox, Ge'ez-liturgied, *rist*-holding, formed for a thousand years — and his belief pointed at a sacred emperor whose local agent was a Tigrayan governor living off his harvest. Thick belief, misaligned floor. And a population in that condition is the cheapest conquest available anywhere, because the conqueror does not have to persuade it of anything. He does not need a robe for it at all. He needs only a wage, a rifle, and the removal of the man it already resents — which is exactly what Italy would offer, and exactly why the *ascari* would come.

That yields the proposition this study exists to test, and it is stated here as a hypothesis and not a conclusion. **The coloniser's choice from the Menu is not free; it is set by the shape of the order he finds.** Where the native order is *fused* — one seam carrying faith, law, tribe and resistance together, as the Sanusiyya carried Cyrenaica, or as the Solomonic Church carried Ethiopia — it cannot be redirected and cannot be ruled around, and the conqueror must raze it or be broken by it, and both are ruinous. Where the native order is *fragmented* — where two complete formations meet along a march and neither holds the field, and the population's belief is misaligned with its floor — the conqueror does not face a seam at all. He faces a fault, and a fault does not have to be broken. It only has to be stood in.

Italy stood in it. And the founding decree records, in its tenth article, exactly what standing in it consisted of: a single Italian councillor, sitting behind a desk in Massawa with the public domain in one hand and the appointment of the sultans, naibs, shaykhs, qadis, shums and kantibais in the other. Six names for a chief, and one hand to confirm them all. That is the cheapest hold in this collection — and the last clause of the same article, *le trattative politiche con l'Etiopia*, is the sentence in which Italy filed an empire it did not understand under a colonial trade portfolio, and began walking toward Adwa.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material, all of it public domain and all of it verified against a source reproducing the text: Royal Decree no. 6592 of 1 January 1890 (articles 1 and 10), from a transcription of the decree as issued, signed *Umberto* and countersigned *F. Crispi*;

Pasquale Stanislao Mancini's speech to the Chamber of 26 June 1882 presenting the bill on Assab (*non dominatori, non tutori, non innovatori…*; *giovare alle sorti avvenire della nostra Marina…*), and his reply to parliamentary interpellations of 27 January 1885 (*le chiavi di quest'ultimo*), both reproduced from the parliamentary record in Andrea Cotticelli's study of the acts of the Chamber and Senate and quoted here at second hand from that reproduction, which is flagged because it is a reproduction and not the *Atti Parlamentari* consulted directly; and Giovanni Giolitti's *Memorie della mia vita* (1922) on the consolation prize and the keys that were never found. The Ge'ez wording of the Ethiopian imperial style and of the *Kebra Nagast* is deliberately not quoted here in the original, because it has not yet been verified against a text; it is given in English only, and the Amharic and Italian texts that matter most to this study — the two versions of Article 17 of the Treaty of Wuchale — will be verified and set side by side in Module 7, where they belong.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted: Tekeste Negash on Italian colonialism in Eritrea; Bahru Zewde and Richard Pankhurst on nineteenth-century Ethiopia; Haggai Erlich on Ras Alula and the northern march, whose account of Alula's exactions on the highland Tigrinya and of the divided modern memory of him is the source for that passage; Raymond Jonas on Adwa; and the standard reference literature on the Habesh eyalet, the Bahr Negash and the Solomonic dynasty. The status of Medri Bahri — whether an autonomous kingdom or a province of the Ethiopian empire — is a live and politically charged dispute between Eritrean and Ethiopian historiography, and no side is taken here; what is asserted is only what both traditions accept, that the plateau north of the Mareb was governed under a distinct office, that its relation to the imperial centre oscillated between vassalage and effective independence, and that this oscillation is itself the datum.

Contested figures, given as ranges. The Assab purchase: six thousand Maria Theresa thalers at the agreement of 15 November 1869, a figure sometimes given as finalised at eight thousand three hundred and fifty when further parties and land were added; the Italian state's redemption of the concession from Rubattino in 1882 is given variously at about 416,000 and about 460,000 lire. Italian illiteracy at the 1871 census is given as roughly sixty-two per cent of men and seventy-six per cent of women, "nearly seventy per cent" overall. Dogali (26 January 1887), which is treated fully in Module 1: the Italian dead are usually reported as 23 officers and about 407 men, which is why the square

before Rome's Termini station is the *Piazza dei Cinquecento*, of the Five Hundred — the figure of five hundred is the popular one and the figure of roughly 430 the enumerated one; Ras Alula's force is given anywhere from seven to fifteen thousand. The rinderpest epizootic of 1887 is attributed by much of the literature to cattle imported by the Italians at Massawa; the attribution is widely repeated and probably right but is not established beyond dispute, and is stated here as attributed rather than proven. Cattle mortality is given at around ninety per cent and in some accounts as high as ninety-three; human mortality in the *Kefu Qen* of 1888–92 is given as "up to a third" of Ethiopia's population, a figure which rests on no census and should be held as an order of magnitude and nothing more. Eritrea's ethnic and religious proportions are modern estimates — the country has never conducted an official census — and are used here only to establish the structure of the fragmentation, not its exact arithmetic in 1885.

MODULE 1

MORE SUITABLE AND LESS COSTLY

How Italy took the march between 1885 and 1890 without ever assembling a floor of its own — a port handed over by Britain, an army bought from an Albanian mercenary, an incumbent killed by other men's hands, a plateau already three years in famine — and the finding that inverts the framework's order: where the conqueror is too poor to build a floor, he can rent one from the people he is conquering, so that co-optation is not laid over the floor but is the floor.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

The questions this module asks, and the answers that do not fit

The framework opens every case at the same place. Who held organised violence at the founding, and how? By what act — conquest, coup, consolidation — was the order established, and against whom? Who was disarmed, or made unable to flee, and by what mechanics? What does the founding legend claim, and what violence does it obscure?

Run those questions at Eritrea and almost every answer comes back crooked, and the crookedness is the finding.

Who held organised violence? By 1890, on the coloniser's own arithmetic, the armed force holding the colony was over nine thousand men of whom barely a third were Italian. The floor was majority-Eritrean from the first year it existed.

By what act was the order established? Not by a battle. Italy's founding acts on this coast were a purchase, a landing on a beach vacated by somebody else, and a walk onto a plateau whose defenders had gone. The one battle Italy fought on its own account in the decade of the founding — Dogali — it lost, and lost catastrophically.

Who was disarmed? Essentially no one. The conqueror did not disarm the conquered; he armed them, selectively, and then taxed the ones he had armed. This is the single most important structural fact in the study, and it is written in Italy's own decrees.

And what does the founding legend obscure? Here the answer is the ordinary one, and it will be given its full weight at the end of the module: an administration whose two senior generals told a parliamentary commission of inquiry, in 1891, that they had ordered men killed in secret, and who were not punished for it.

The port that was promised to Ethiopia and given to Italy

The floor begins, as floors often do, with a document signed by people who were not there.

On 3 June 1884 Britain, Egypt and Ethiopia concluded what the Italians called the Hewett treaty — Melli, writing fifteen years later, describes it as marking the apogee of the power of the Negus John — by which the emperor Yohannes IV undertook to help extract the Egyptian garrisons besieged by the Mahdists in the Sudan, and received in return the free transit of goods through Massawa and the cession of the Bogos country. Yohannes did his part. Eight months later the port through which his goods were to pass free was handed to a European power.

The mechanism was the collapse of the Sudan. On 26 January 1885 Khartoum fell and Gordon was killed; the Egyptian position on the Red Sea was finished, and Britain, unwilling to garrison Massawa and unwilling to see France there, looked for a substitute. Melli, an Italian officer writing for an Italian public, records the arrangement in a phrase whose vagueness is itself informative: England, to prevent the ports falling into the hands of powers less friendly than Italy, and to have a hand ready in its own enterprise against the Sudan, *o suggeriva o autorizzava l'occupazione di Massaua* — either suggested or authorised the occupation of Massawa. On 5 February 1885 Colonel Tancredi Saletta's Corpo Speciale per l'Africa came ashore. Not a shot was fired. The Egyptian garrison was leaving; the Ottoman protest was a formality. And the news of Khartoum's fall, Melli notes, reached Europe on the very day of the landing.

That is the floor of force in this colony at its founding: a beach handed over by one empire that had promised it to a third, on the day a fourth was destroyed. Whatever Italy was, on 5 February 1885 it was not a conqueror. It was a tenant.

The metropole understood this well enough to be embarrassed by it. On 17 June 1885 Mancini — the man who three years earlier had promised the Chamber "our new fellow-citizens" and five months earlier the keys of the Mediterranean — survived a vote by one hundred and sixty-three to one hundred and fifty-nine, and resigned. The architect of the reversed robe was gone within a year of the landing it justified, brought down not by the cruelty of the enterprise but by its modesty.

The army Italy bought

Now the fact that organises everything downstream.

When Saletta landed he had Italian troops and no knowledge of the country, and there was already an armed force on the ground. It was a band of irregulars in the Ottoman tradition, inherited by way of Egypt, known as the *basci-buzuk* — the Turkish word means, approximately, crazy heads — and it had been raised in the region by an Albanian adventurer, Sangiak Hassan, who hired it out to whichever local lord would pay. In 1885 Saletta took it into Italian service. The Italian record's standing formula for the transaction is that he bought them *armi, mogli e figli compresi* — weapons, wives and children included — and while I have not been able to trace that phrase to a document of the period and so will not attribute it to anyone, the substance is not in dispute: the men, their arms and their households passed into Italian service as a unit. On 30 April 1885 the band's commander, an Albanian called Osman, was commissioned to recruit a hundred more irregulars for the Special Corps for Africa. In December 1886 a first nucleus of thirty-five was constituted for customs police work.

From that mercenary band the *ascari* grew. General Antonio Baldissera regularised the irregulars from 1887; on 1 October 1888 the first four native battalions were formed, garrisoned at Saati, Arkiko, Moncullo and Massawa; on 10 June 1889 they were gathered into a Native Infantry Regiment. The men took the name *ascari*, from the Arabic *'askarī*, soldier. Melli describes the reform in one line and its caste architecture is complete in that line: regular units of native troops were formed, *inquadrandoli con ufficiali e sottufficiali italiani* — framed with Italian officers and non-commissioned officers. The natives were the rank and file. The cadres were Italian. That ceiling was fixed at the founding of the force and it was never lifted, and it is the same ceiling that will appear in the schools in Module 4 and in the marriage bed in Module 9. The colonial order gave the Eritrean the

formation that made him useful and withheld the formation that would have obliged it to admit him. That pairing begins here, in 1888, in an army.

Then comes the sentence this module is named for. Describing the reorganisation of 1890, Melli writes:

> *Allo scopo di aumentare il corpo coloniale senza bisogno di maggiori spese, riconosciutosi che l'elemento indigeno nella bassa forza riusciva più adatto e meno dispendioso di quello italiano, coi regi decreti del 28 agosto, 3 settembre e 2 ottobre 1890, fu modificata la costituzione del corpo speciale d'Africa, delle truppe indigene e degli altri reparti e servizi vari, portando il complesso delle truppe coloniali ad oltre 9000 uomini, dei quali poco più di un terzo italiani ed il resto indigeni.*

>

> With the aim of increasing the colonial corps without need of greater expense, it being recognised that the native element in the rank and file proved more suitable and less costly than the Italian, by the royal decrees of 28 August, 3 September and 2 October 1890 the constitution of the Special Corps for Africa, of the native troops and of the other units and services was modified, bringing the whole of the colonial troops to over 9,000 men, of whom a little more than a third were Italian and the rest native.

Più adatto e meno dispendioso. More suitable and less costly. There it is, in an Italian officer's flat administrative prose, unashamed, published in Rome in 1899: the entire method of this colony, stated as a budgetary observation. The point is not that the sentence is cynical — it is not especially cynical, it is simply true, and Melli plainly thought he was recording a success. The point is that the whole of what the framework calls co-optation is here presented as a line in an accounts book, because from where Melli sat that is exactly what it was.

And the arming did not stop at the regular battalions. Melli's next paragraphs describe how, on the western march between the colony and the Mahdist Sudan, Italy promoted military organisation among the frontier tribes and instituted *bande armate* — armed bands which, at moments of danger, *mediante lievi compensi* (by means of slight payments) would gather under their own chiefs and form a first barrier against invasion. The named bands run down the whole roster of the shatter zone: Hamasien, Seraye,

Akele Guzai, the Beni Amer, the Baria, the Ad-Uad, the Algheden, the Sabderat. And then the line that should be read twice:

> *Con tali istituzioni, venendosi a giovare anche alle stesse tribù, che così si ritenevano più sicure e protette, fu possibile sottoporle a leggeri tributi che andarono a beneficio del bilancio coloniale.*

>

> With such institutions, benefiting the tribes themselves, who thereby considered themselves safer and better protected, it became possible to subject them to light tributes which went to the benefit of the colonial budget.

Arm them at slight cost, under their own chiefs, and they will feel protected — and pay you for it. The floor and the extraction, in a single instrument, at a profit. This is the cheapest hold in the entire collection, and Italy wrote it down.

By 1891 the retrenchment under Di Rudinì had cut the regular forces of the colony to a little over six thousand men by royal decree of 11 June, on a colonial budget of some eight million lire, and had pulled the permanent military occupation back almost entirely to what Melli calls *il famoso triangolo Massaua Asmara e Keren* — the famous triangle of Massawa, Asmara and Keren. From that triangle, he writes, governmental action was exercised over the whole territory of the colony — some eighty-five thousand square kilometres — *per mezzo di capi indigeni a noi sottomessi e devoti e di ufficiali italiani distaccati nelle principali località, detti Residenti, sostenuti da bande e da reparti sempre in moto*: by means of native chiefs submitted and devoted to us, and Italian officers detached in the principal localities, called Residents, supported by bands and by units always in motion.

Three towns. Six thousand regulars, two-thirds of them Eritrean. A scatter of Residents. Bought chiefs, hired bands, and columns kept moving. That is the whole floor, and it held a country.

Apply the revealed-preference test, which the framework calls its sharpest diagnostic: an apex pays for nothing it does not need. Italy paid nothing to persuade the Eritreans, and it did not because their belief bought it nothing. But Italy also declined to pay for an Italian army of occupation — and it did not because it did not need one either. Both absences are findings, and the second is the one nobody expects: the conqueror did not merely refuse

to build a robe for the conquered, he refused to build a floor of his own, and he could refuse because the conquered would supply the floor for a wage.

Dogali, and the legend built on it

The one time Italy tried to hold this ground with its own men against a real enemy, it was annihilated.

In January 1887 Italian troops occupied Saati, Ua-à and Zula — villages inland from Massawa, inside a province whose Ethiopian governor, Ras Alula Engida, had told them to leave. On 24 or 25 January Alula assaulted the fort at Saati and was thrown back with hundreds dead against four Italians hurt: the ordinary arithmetic of rifles and artillery against men who lacked them, the arithmetic the framework says holds almost everywhere it is patiently applied. And then, on 26 January, Alula ambushed the relief column. Lieutenant-Colonel Tommaso De Cristoforis had about five hundred Italians and some fifty Eritrean auxiliaries; Alula had, on estimates ranging from seven to fifteen thousand, an overwhelming force in broken ground. The Italian machine guns jammed. The column formed square, held for hours, exhausted its ammunition, and was cut down. The Italian dead are enumerated at twenty-three officers and about four hundred and seven men; some eighty wounded escaped notice and were recovered. Five days later Alula entered Asmara.

Rome's response was the response of a metropole whose robe has been torn. Parliament voted five million lire at once; over the summer an expeditionary corps of twenty thousand was assembled, and it landed at Massawa in November under San Marzano; by the end of 1887 the colony held some eighteen thousand troops, of whom only about two thousand were native. And the legend was built with the speed and the permanence that these things are built with. The square before Rome's Termini station is to this day the *Piazza dei Cinquecento* — of the Five Hundred — and an obelisk was raised to them. Melli, writing in 1899, calls the battle *l'eccidio di Dogali*, the massacre of Dogali, and Ras Alula its *autore*, its author.

Set the legend beside what it covers, and lay out the arithmetic without drawing the sum.

The Five Hundred were in the field because Italy had occupied villages in a province of the Ethiopian empire. Their commander marched into a defile despite repeated warnings of a large enemy concentration. The enemy was the lawful governor of the district, acting

— as the Emperor Yohannes would afterwards insist to the British consul Gerald Portal, in an exchange preserved in the scholarship and paraphrased here rather than quoted, since I have not seen the original words — with complete propriety: Alula had done no wrong, the Italians had come into the province under his governorship and he had fought them, precisely as the British would fight Abyssinians who came to England. Nothing in that is a defence of the killing of five hundred men. It is only the observation that the word *eccidio*, massacre, is doing work: it converts a defeat in a war Italy had started into an atrocity committed against Italy, and a defeat that would otherwise have argued for withdrawal became, within four months, an argument for twenty thousand more men. Dogali is the founding legend of Italian Eritrea, and the founding legend of Italian Eritrea is a defeat.

And there is a detail in the casualty list that belongs to this study and to no other. About fifty of the men in De Cristoforis's column were Eritreans. They died at Dogali, for Italy, in January 1887 — three years before the colony existed, before there was an ascari battalion, before there was a name for the place they had died for. They are the first of the men this whole study is about. There is no square in Rome for them.

The floor that other hands broke

Between Dogali and the founding of the colony lie three years in which almost everything that mattered to the establishment of the Italian floor was done by somebody other than Italy.

In 1887 rinderpest entered the Horn through the Eritrean coast — the introduction attributed in much of the literature to cattle imported to feed the Italian troops, an attribution widely repeated and probably right but not established beyond dispute — and killed on the order of ninety per cent of the cattle of the highlands. Behind the cattle came drought and locusts, and behind them the *Kefu Qen*, the evil days, the great famine of 1888 to 1892, whose human mortality is conventionally given as up to a third of Ethiopia's population and cannot be known. In January 1888 the Mahdists sacked Gondar. And on 9 or 10 March 1889, at Metemma, the Emperor Yohannes IV — the man who had beaten two Egyptian armies, the strongest floor in the Horn — was mortally wounded fighting the Mahdists, and the Mahdists took his head to Omdurman.

There is the incumbent's floor: broken by a cattle plague, a famine, and a rival Islamic movement four hundred miles away, none of them Italian.

What followed was the succession chaos the Ethiopian order had spent four centuries designing itself to prevent. Menelik of Shewa proclaimed himself emperor on 26 March; Yohannes's son Mengesha claimed the throne too; and Tigray dissolved into a war of chiefs — Mengesha, Debeb, Sebhat, Kafel — each trying to take the northern kingdom from the others. Melli, unembarrassed, gives the moment its Italian name: *L'ora propizia era giunta per l'Italia.* The propitious hour had come for Italy.

Baldissera used it exactly as the framework predicts a conqueror uses a fractured elite. In early February 1889 he sent Major De Maio to reconnoitre Keren, and then had the town occupied not by Italians but by an Abyssinian exile who had put himself at Italy's service, the Barambaras Kafel — while simultaneously, in Melli's own verb, *aizzava* — inciting, setting on — the rebel Debeb against Tigray, who duly occupied Asmara on his own account. Two Abyssinian chiefs, bought and pointed at each other and at their own emperor's province, take the two towns Italy wants.

And then the second half of the lesson, which every intermediary in this study will eventually learn. Kafel, having taken Keren for Italy, began to govern it for himself, and his attitude became, Melli writes, suspect of treason and of probable connivance with Ras Alula. On 2 June 1889 Italian troops under the same Major De Maio seized Keren by surprise, disarmed the Barambaras, and relegated him to Assab, where — by accounts I have seen only in Eritrean sources and therefore report rather than assert — he died. The chief who can be bought is the chief who can be discarded, and the interval between the two was four months.

On 3 August 1889 Baldissera occupied Asmara in person, and Melli records with satisfaction where the general chose to lodge: *installandosi nell'antica residenza del Ras tigrino autore dell'eccidio di Dogali* — installing himself in the former residence of the Tigrayan Ras who was the author of the massacre of Dogali. He moved into Alula's house. Asmara at that moment was a town of a few thousand people living in mud *agdo* and *hidmo*; the Italians put their fort on the hill of Beit Mekae and moved the villagers off it. Within days Seraye and Akele Guzai followed. The Treaty of Wuchale, signed with Menelik on 2 May, had already put Italy's name on the ground — and what that treaty said, in its two languages, is the business of Module 7 and will not be touched here.

On 1 January 1890 the royal decree gathered it all into a colony.

So the founding of the Italian floor in Eritrea consisted of: a port given by Britain, an army bought from an Albanian, two towns taken by bribed Abyssinian rebels, a plateau entered while its emperor lay three months dead and headless and its people were in the third year of a famine, and a treaty with a claimant who wanted Italian rifles for a civil war of his own. Italy supplied the money and the officers. It is a conquest in the sense that a conquest is what the record calls it. It is not a conquest in the sense the founding legend requires, and the founding legend was, in any case, about a defeat.

Who was disarmed, and the pen that was already built

Which leaves the framework's hardest Module 1 question, the mechanics of capturability: what made the governed unable to disperse?

The Libya study answered that question the hard way. A mobile pastoral people offered the conqueror no natural pen, so the pen had to be manufactured by hand — the wire, the sixteen camps, the deportation of a whole population — and the manufacturing of capturability *was* the atrocity. Eritrea gives the opposite answer, and the answer is not that Italy was gentler. It is that on the plateau the pen was already built, and the native order had built it.

Consider what the Tigrinya highlander was. He was a sedentary cultivator in a fixed village on a plateau which, before the Italians, had no towns at all — his world was the village, the terraced fields around it, and the church. His title to his land was *rist*: land held by descent, a claim that ran through his ancestry and was traced through it, so that his field was not a possession he could liquidate and carry away but the material form of who his forefathers were. A man in that position cannot flee. Not because a wall stops him, but because to leave the land is to forfeit the only thing that establishes him as himself — and the framework's cost column, which asks why the subject cannot simply leave, has rarely been filled so completely by an arrangement the conqueror had no hand in making. Add that the plateau sits sixty-odd miles from a port; that a road ran up it; that by 1888 a railway already reached Saati; and that the church which anchored the peasant to the village was a fixed, visible, enumerable institution whose priests were also neighbours and landholders and could be reached.

The cost column, in short, was full before Italy turned a single dial. The two dials — the credibility of force and the availability of exit — had been set by the settlement pattern and the tenure system of the people being conquered.

And the contrast within the colony proves the mechanism, because the lowlands were not like this at all. The Beni Amer, the Beja, the Afar, the Tigre pastoralists of the western and coastal plains were mobile, and a mobile people cannot be penned without building the pen. So Italy did not pen them. It hired them — the *bande*, under their own chiefs, for slight payments, and then a light tribute for the protection. The same empire, in one small colony, met both kinds of people and used both instruments, and never had to reach for the third. In Libya, facing pastoralists it could not hire, it reached for the third.

What the floor actually did

None of the above should be allowed to soften into the story that Italian Eritrea was taken bloodlessly, and the corrective comes from the coloniser's own archive.

In 1890 and 1891 the colony was engulfed by scandal. The colonial secretary, the lawyer Cagnassi, and the head of the native police, Lieutenant Livraghi, were accused of abuse of power, unjust condemnations, extortion, seizures, and the killing and suppression of individuals and of whole armed bands without any formality of law. The accusations reached the governors themselves. Parliament, unable to contain the uproar, sent a Royal Commission of Inquiry to Eritrea: it left on 9 April 1891, spent fifty-five days in the colony, and reported in November. Its president was Senator Borgnini. Its vice-president was the deputy **Ferdinando Martini** — who would return to Eritrea six years later as its governor, and whose administration is the subject of Modules 2 and 9.

What the Commission found, as Melli reports it, was this. Generals Baldissera and Orero, in moments of grave danger to the colony, had ordered or authorised *l'uccisione segreta* — the secret killing — of eight persons and of one person respectively, because they were fomenting treason and rebellion among the population. Both generals stated this explicitly to the Commission and assumed full responsibility for it; Baldissera further took responsibility for two more men who lost their lives resisting an arrest he had ordered carried out at any cost. The Commission then found the reports of collective massacres to be false. Livraghi, from his refuge in Lugano, had published a memorial claiming that around eight hundred individuals from disbanded bands had been

suppressed and some fifty more killed singly. The Commission concluded that no collective killings had taken place at all, and that the isolated ones — including those not proved but merely suspected — might number, in Melli's transcription of the Commission's own words, *circa 12, od al più 15, ma certamente non più di 20*: about twelve, or at most fifteen, but certainly not more than twenty.

Give it as a range and name the contest, which is what the discipline requires. Between eleven killings admitted by two generals and about eight hundred and fifty alleged by a fugitive policeman there is a gulf, and the body that measured it was appointed by the state that had done it, sat for fifty-five days, and was chaired in part by a man who would later govern the place. Whether the Commission was an audit or a valve is Module 7's question, and it is flagged here and left there.

But the floor of the admitted facts is quite hard enough. Two general officers of a European army told a parliamentary commission that they had ordered men killed in secret without trial, gave the numbers, took responsibility, and were not punished. The subsequent trial at Massawa convicted, in Melli's account, some wicked *native* agents and absolved the colonial officials. That is the floor of force in Italian Eritrea: a small, cheap, mostly Eritrean army; a handful of Italian Residents; bought chiefs; hired bands; and, where it was needed, a general's order and a body nobody was to hear about.

Reading the floor against the framework

Three contributions, and the first is the largest thing this study has to say.

One: the rented floor. The framework's spine says the floor comes first — force is the founding fact — and the belief is laid over it afterwards to make the holding cheap. Eritrea shows a third path, available where the conqueror can afford neither. Italy could not pay for an army of occupation and could not install a belief in the conquered, and it needed to do neither, because it could *buy a slice of the conquered and let them be the floor*. On the coloniser's own decrees the colonial troops stood at over nine thousand in 1890 with barely a third Italian, and at just over six thousand in 1891, holding eighty-five thousand square kilometres from three towns through native chiefs, Italian Residents, and paid bands.

So co-optation, in this case, is not a technique laid over the floor. **It is the floor.** And that suggests a question to be added to Module 1's BUILD in every future case: *what*

proportion of the force holding the ground was recruited from the ground? Where the answer is a minority, the study is about a conqueror holding a people down. Where it is a majority — as here — the study is about a conqueror holding a people down *with other members of the same people*, and the analytical weight shifts entirely off the conqueror's coercive capacity and onto the question the cost column will have to answer in Module 5: what was the recruited slice paid, and why did their ledger come out the way it did?

Two: capturability can be inherited rather than manufactured. Module 1 currently asks what made the governed unable to disperse. It should also ask *who built the thing that made them unable to disperse* — the conqueror, or the order he displaced. A sedentary, descent-titled, church-anchored peasantry on a road-reachable plateau is a pen the conqueror finds; a mobile pastoral people is not. And the fork that follows is stark: where the native cannot be penned, he is either **hired** (Eritrea's lowland *bande*) or **cleared** (Libya's camps), and which of the two he gets depends on whether he can be bought. The two dials of the cost column are therefore set, before the conqueror ever touches them, by the settlement pattern and the land tenure of the conquered. That is a structural variable the framework has been treating as background, and it is not background; it is most of the price.

Three: the founding floor may be broken by a third party, and the legend will not say so. Italy's floor was established in a window opened by rinderpest, famine, the Mahdists, and an Ethiopian succession crisis. Its own founding battle was a defeat, which it then recast as a massacre and used to fund a twenty-thousand-man expedition. So a discipline to add: at every founding, ask what *else* was breaking the incumbent at the moment the conqueror arrived, and distrust the founding legend in exact proportion to how much of the work it claims for the conqueror's arms. Lieutenant Melli, in 1899, was more honest about this than the monument in the Piazza dei Cinquecento. *L'ora propizia era giunta per l'Italia.* The hour had come. He did not say the army had.

One last image, and it is Melli's, and he did not understand what he was writing down — or rather, he understood it exactly and could do nothing about it. On 6 December 1891 the Italian governor Gandolfi met Ras Mangesha on the Mareb to swear a peace fixing the colony's southern border, and Ras Alula came with him. Melli notes in a footnote that Alula's bearing at the meeting was proud and aloof, that he held himself apart, and that when the oaths were sworn he is said to have expressed himself in these terms: that he was the faithful servant of Ras Mangesha, and therefore swore to be the friend of his friends.

A form of words which swore precisely nothing to Italy. Melli saw it — the phrasing, he writes, betrayed intentions anything but resigned.

Four years and three months later, Ras Alula was at Adwa.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material, all of it public domain. The load-bearing text of this module is Beniamino Melli, *La Colonia Eritrea* (1899), an Italian lieutenant's narrative history of the colony written nine years after its founding and reproduced in full on Italian Wikisource; it is quoted here in the original with translation for the 1890 reorganisation of the colonial corps (*più adatto e meno dispendioso*; over 9,000 men, a little over a third Italian), for the armed *bande* and the light tributes levied on them, for Di Rudinì's retrenchment onto the Massawa–Asmara–Keren triangle and the rule through submitted native chiefs and Italian Residents, for the phrase *o suggeriva o autorizzava l'occupazione di Massaua*, for *l'ora propizia era giunta per l'Italia*, for Baldissera lodging in Alula's residence, and for the Royal Commission's finding on the secret killings, including what Melli marks as the Commission's own words on the number. Melli must be read for what he is: a serving Italian officer writing a patriotic history, who calls Dogali a massacre and Menelik duplicitous. That is precisely why he is valuable. He is the robe, read against the grain — and the most damaging facts in this module are the ones he volunteers without embarrassment, because from where he stood they were not damaging at all.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted: Haggai Erlich on Ras Alula, the Saati–Dogali sequence, and the Portal exchange with Yohannes IV (whose words I have paraphrased rather than quoted, having not seen the original text); Tekeste Negash on Italian colonialism in Eritrea; Bahru Zewde and Richard Pankhurst on Ethiopia in the 1880s; and the standard reference literature on the Regio corpo truppe coloniali d'Eritrea for the dates of the basci-buzuk purchase, the 1888 battalions and the 1889 regiment.

Contested figures, given as ranges. Dogali: the Italian dead are enumerated at 23 officers and about 407 men, though the popular figure — and the name of the Roman square — is five hundred; Ras Alula's force is given anywhere between seven and fifteen thousand. The Italian garrison at the end of 1887 is given at about 18,000 with about

2,000 native; the 1890 colonial corps at over 9,000 with a little over a third Italian; the 1891 establishment at just over 6,000. The killings admitted to the Royal Commission are eight ordered by Baldissera, one by Orero, and two more for which Baldissera accepted responsibility; the Commission's own estimate of all isolated killings, proved and merely suspected, was about twelve, at most fifteen, and certainly not more than twenty; Livraghi's counter-claim was some eight hundred suppressed and fifty more killed. The true figure is not recoverable and the range is stated rather than resolved. The dates of the Keren occupations vary between sources (a first entry in February 1889 through the Barambaras Kafel, the Italian seizure of 2 June 1889, and one account giving December 1889); Melli's sequence is followed here. The rinderpest attribution to Italian-imported cattle is reported as attributed, not proven; cattle mortality is given at around ninety per cent; the human mortality of the *Kefu Qen* as "up to a third" of Ethiopia's population, an order of magnitude resting on no census. The phrase *armi, mogli e figli compresi* could not be traced to a period document and is therefore identified as the Italian literature's standing formula rather than attributed to a named source.

MODULE 2

THE FIELDS THEY CAME BACK TO

Who got what — a decree that made the whole colony Crown land, four hundred thousand hectares expropriated while their owners were starving somewhere else, thirty Italian families to put on them, and the client chief Italy had made who turned when the land was taken; and the finding the extraction fork now needs, that dispossession tends to elimination only where the settler actually arrives, and where he does not, the coloniser stops taking the land and starts taking the men.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

Name the instrument first

The framework's rule for Module 2 is unambiguous: where the settlement runs through a legal instrument — charter, constitution, title, Act — that instrument *is* the primary robe, the floor's fiction in its plainest form, and it must be named as such before any second, more decorative doctrine is hunted. So begin with the instrument.

Royal Decree no. 23 of 19 January 1893 made the entire territory of the Colony of Eritrea the property of the state.

That is the settlement. Everything else in this module is a consequence of it or a failure downstream of it. One paragraph of Italian law, signed in Rome three years after the colony was founded, converted every acre of a country into *terra demaniale* — Crown land — and the fiction it rests on is the oldest in the whole of colonial jurisprudence: that land which is not held by a title an Italian court would recognise is land which is not held at all, and therefore belongs to the state by default. It is a fiction in the exact sense the framework means. Nobody in Hamasien or Seraye or Akele Guzai thought their fields were unowned. They knew precisely who owned them, and by what right, and had

known for centuries. What they lacked was a piece of paper in a language the new sovereign read.

Within that fiction the coloniser then drew a second line, and the second line is where the study's thesis becomes visible in the law itself. Italy did not expropriate uniformly. It went, above all, for *gulti*. And to see why that mattered, the native settlement has to be built first.

What was there before

Three systems held the land of the Eritrean highlands, and they were not a mess but an architecture.

Diesa — also *shehena* — was village communal tenure, and it was the dominant form on the plateau. The land belonged to the village as a body; it was divided into plots and allotted in rotation to the households of the village according to their status and need, and redistributed periodically, every three or five or seven years. One panel of elders ruled on who was eligible as a resident of the village; another allotted the plots, equal in size and quality, by lot. Any man of the village starting a household was entitled to a share. Residence normally passed down the male line, and no peasant could hold land in more than one village.

Resti (or *risti*) was descent tenure: a family's claim in land derived from the first settlement of an ancestor in that territory and passed down from him through the generations. Your right to the field was your genealogy, recited.

Gulti was the tribute right. It was introduced onto this ground by the Ethiopian emperors — in the literature, from around the sixteenth century — when they began granting the revenues of land to their soldiers and supporters, and to endow monasteries and convents. The *gulti*-holder did not own the soil; he owned the right to take from it. A noble, a *ras*'s retainer, a church.

Two things follow immediately, and the first is a correction to this study's own Module 1, which is what "tested, not revealed" is for. Module 1 leaned on *rist* as the mechanism that penned the highlander, and *rist* is real, but *diesa* is the stronger case and the more common one, and the correction sharpens the argument rather than weakening it. Under *diesa* a man's right to land is not merely inherited — it is a function of his *membership of a particular village*. He receives a plot because he is of that place, and the elders of that place

say so. Leave, and he does not carry a title with him; he has no title anywhere else. The plateau was therefore a landscape in which a peasant could not, in any meaningful sense, go anywhere: to leave the village was to become landless in the whole world. The cost column was full and the exit dial was set to zero, and both had been set by an order Italy had no hand in building.

The second thing that follows is the shape of the target. *Gulti* was the tenure of the nobility and the Church — which is to say, of exactly the class whose loyalty ran south across the Mareb, to the Abyssinian emperor who had granted it. *Diesa* and *resti* were the tenures of the villagers — which is to say, of exactly the class whose sons Italy wanted in its battalions. And Italian land policy, in its stated form, went after the first and largely spared the second. Lands under *resti* and *diesa* were, in the law as written, exempted from expropriation. Land ownership in the colony was reserved to Italians alone; the rest was Crown land, on which pastoralists might graze.

Read that as a settlement and it is beautifully economical. Dispossess the aristocracy and the monasteries whose allegiance you can never win; leave the villages of the peasants whose sons you intend to buy; and pay for the whole thing with land that belonged, in your own law, to nobody. It is the co-optation thesis written into a land code.

The trouble is that it did not work, and it did not work for a reason that has nothing to do with law and everything to do with a famine.

The land they measured in a famine

Here is the fact around which this module turns, and it should be stated flatly and then left alone.

The highlands onto which Italy walked in 1889 and 1890 were half-empty, and they were half-empty because of the *Kefu Qen* — the great famine of 1888 to 1892 that followed the rinderpest, that killed on the order of ninety per cent of the cattle of the plateau, and whose human mortality is conventionally given as up to a third of Ethiopia's population. Villages had been abandoned. Fields lay unworked. Peasants had walked off the plateau to look for food.

And in those years Italy surveyed the land, found it vacant, and took it.

Then the famine ended and the peasants came home, and found that the fields they had left were Crown land.

The number attached to the taking is large: Leopoldo Franchetti, the Tuscan baron whom Crispi's government appointed Commissioner for Colonisation in 1890, expropriated, on Tekeste Negash's account, **over four hundred thousand hectares** of the highlands and declared them available for Italian settlers. Riots and local revolts followed. They followed for the most obvious of reasons — men had come back to their villages and found their entitlement gone — and they expose the gap between the settlement as written and the settlement as executed. In law, *diesa* and *resti* were protected. In fact, the men doing the measuring in 1891 and 1892 were standing in a landscape depopulated by starvation, deciding which of it was occupied, and the standard they applied to a village that had walked away from a famine was that nobody lived there.

That is the settlement of Italian Eritrea. Not a conquest of land from men holding it, but a survey conducted while they were away burying their children.

There is no need to editorialise this and I will not. Lay the two facts side by side. Italy's own troops, in 1887, imported the cattle to which the literature widely attributes the rinderpest — an attribution probable rather than proven, and stated here as attributed. The rinderpest produced the famine. The famine emptied the plateau. The empty plateau was declared Crown land and reserved for Italian farmers. Whether any Italian at any stage intended that sequence I do not know and cannot know, and it does not matter to the structure. The arithmetic is the arithmetic.

Thirty families

Now the part that turns this from a familiar colonial crime into a genuinely strange one, and it is the reason Eritrea earns its place in this corpus.

Having taken four hundred thousand hectares, Italy had nobody to put on them.

Franchetti's scheme was a serious one, conceived by a serious man. He was the co-author, with Sidney Sonnino, of the great 1876 private inquiry into the condition of Sicily; he had spent his life on the Southern Question; and he believed that a state-planned, state-subsidised settlement of landless Italian peasants on colonial soil — modelled on the sharecropping of central Italy, which he thought bound a family to its land and to its country — was simultaneously the answer to Italian rural misery and the making of a real

colony. It was, on its own terms, a welfare project as much as an imperial one. Crispi backed it. The office was created. The land was taken.

And then the arithmetic arrived.

The experimental farms Franchetti actually established on the plateau, at Asmara, Godofelassi and Gura, ran to something on the order of fifty hectares in total. The endowment made available to him was initially one hundred and twenty thousand lire a year, later raised to two hundred thousand — a sum that would seat, at a cost per family of a little over four thousand lire, some scores of people, when the fantasy in the Roman press had been of settling thousands of the peasants whom Franchetti himself had watched living in conditions he called appalling in Sicily, Calabria and Basilicata. Between 1891 and 1894 the number of Italian peasant families actually transplanted to the Eritrean highlands was **about thirty**. By the early 1930s, forty years on, **two** of those families were still there.

Set that against the alternative the Italian peasant actually had. Nicola Labanca's estimate is that around two thousand Italians settled in Eritrea in the eleven years from 1885 to 1896. In the single year 1896, some three hundred thousand Italians emigrated — to Argentina, to Brazil, to the United States. The Italian population of the whole colony stood at about four thousand on the eve of the Great War and did not exceed five thousand until 1930.

Four hundred thousand hectares. Thirty families. That is the settlement of the *colonia primogenita*, and the Governor of Eritrea conceded in 1910 that the effort had failed.

The reason is not mysterious and it is not moral. It is a wage. A Calabrian labourer weighing Asmara against Buenos Aires was running position logic, and Buenos Aires paid. The colony could not compete for the very population it had been justified by — and it had been justified by exactly that population, since the Royal Commission of 1891 had recommended keeping Eritrea in part on the ground that it might one day serve as an outlet for a portion of Italian emigration. The outlet was open. Almost nobody used it.

The chief they made, and unmade

The dispossession did produce one thing on schedule, and the framework predicted it: a revolt. What it did not predict — and what makes this the most instructive revolt in the study — is who led it.

Bahta Hagos was born at Segeneiti in Akele Guzai, somewhere between 1839 and 1850, into a prosperous peasant family of cattle-holders; like many around Segeneiti he was baptised a Catholic by the Lazarist missionary Giustino de Jacobis. In 1875 he killed the son of the Tigrayan governor Ras Araya in a skirmish over raiding, and he and his brothers went into the lowlands as *shifta* — outlaws — from where they raided the caravans of Ras Alula. Read that sentence against the Landscape and the whole thesis of this study is standing in it: here is a Christian Tigrinya highlander whose formation was entirely Abyssinian and whose enemy was entirely Abyssinian, and he had been at war with the Ethiopian floor for fourteen years before an Italian ever offered him anything.

So he took what was offered. By 1889 his forces were an important flank of the Italian move onto the plateau. Italy made him *Dejazmach* of Akele Guzai — and note the title: an Abyssinian rank, in the Abyssinian hierarchy, conferred by an Italian colonial government, which is the cheapest hold in the collection performing itself in a single word. In December 1893 he fought for Italy against the Mahdists at Agordat.

Twelve months later he was dead, killed by Italian troops.

What turned him was the land. The expropriations were running across his province; the seizure of Church land is named in the accounts among his grievances; and the final demand was that he surrender his men's old rifles, ostensibly to have them replaced with better ones. On 14 or 15 December 1894 he seized the Italian officer at Segeneiti, cut the telegraph line to Asmara, and declared Akele Guzai independent, calling out the province with a force generally given at between fifteen hundred and two thousand men. He is reported to have proclaimed himself an avenger of rights trampled by the Italians, and to have told his people that the Italians were seizing their land and that they should drive them out and be their own masters. Those words circulate widely, in English translation, in secondary and popular accounts; I have not been able to verify them against a primary text, and so I paraphrase them and flag them rather than putting them in quotation marks. What is not in doubt is the substance, because the sequence establishes it: the land was taken, and the man Italy had made rose against Italy.

Baratieri sent Major Pietro Toselli. Toselli negotiated at Segeneiti while his reinforcements came up; by the evening of 17 December he had fifteen hundred men and two guns. Bahta had already slipped away in the night to storm the small Italian fort at Halai, held by some two hundred and twenty men under Captain Castellazzi. On 18 December, with

the fort close to falling, Toselli's column struck the besiegers in the rear. Bahta Hagos was shot and killed; the date is given as 18 or 19 December 1894.

The structure is the same as Barambaras Kafel's in Module 1, one rung higher and eighteen months later, and it should be stated plainly because it is a law of this order and not an accident: **the chief who can be bought is the chief who can be discarded, and what makes him rise is not the buying but the taking.** Italy could purchase a man's sword indefinitely and cheaply. It could not purchase his land, because his land was not for sale — a stock is not a rate, and there was nothing to ease.

From a land decree to Adwa

Follow the sequence, and do not soften the joints.

Baratieri's response to the revolt of December 1894 was to conclude that Ras Mengesha of Tigray was behind it — Bahta had indeed claimed Mengesha's support, and had travelled to Addis Ababa with Mengesha, Alula and Woldemichael Solomon that June to be reconciled with Menelik — and to cross the Mareb. In January 1895 he beat Mengesha at Coatit. Having beaten him, he went on: Adigrat, Adwa, Mekele, and the deepening occupation of Tigray that Menelik would answer. In December 1895 Toselli — the same Toselli — was killed with most of his men at Amba Alagi. On 1 March 1896 the Italian army was destroyed at Adwa.

So: a decree of January 1893 makes the colony Crown land; the survey takes four hundred thousand hectares from a plateau emptied by famine; the taking turns the client chief; the client chief's revolt supplies the pretext to cross into Tigray; the crossing into Tigray produces Adwa.

That is not a claim that the land decree caused Adwa in any tidy sense — Wuchale was already a running sore, and the ambition to swallow Ethiopia predated Bahta Hagos. It is the observation that the settlement and the catastrophe are on one causal chain, that Italy's own record puts them there, and that the arithmetic can be laid out without anybody preaching a sum. The chain runs from a piece of paper to a field of dead men in three years.

And Adwa killed the settlement in turn. Ferdinando Martini — the deputy who had sat as vice-president of the Royal Commission of Inquiry in 1891, and who was appointed Royal Commissioner and first civil governor on 21 November 1897 — abandoned mass

agrarian colonisation. Franchetti himself never accepted the verdict, arguing as late as 1914 that Adwa had been a setback and not a refutation. But the state had done its sum. The colony would not be filled with Italian peasants. It would be run.

Who actually got what

So run the framework's question again, hard, because the interesting answer is not the one the land decree gives.

Who is inside the settlement and who is out, and what marks the boundary? In law, the marker is stark and simple: **land ownership in the Colony of Eritrea was restricted to Italians.** That is the boundary, and it is a caste boundary, and no Eritrean crossed it. The Italian community that formed on the plateau was not, in the event, a peasantry at all; it was what Labanca calls a strongly *notabiliare* society — officials, officers, professionals, missionaries, and the families that followed them. The settlement produced a colonial middle class where it had promised a colonial yeomanry.

And what did the Eritrean get? Not land: he kept, at best, what he had already had, minus what had been surveyed away while he was starving. What he got was **a wage.** And this is the hinge of the whole study, because it was the *failure* of the land settlement that made the wage necessary.

Consider Italy's position after 1896. It holds four hundred thousand hectares it cannot fill. It has expropriated a plateau and produced no settlers. Worse — and this is the finding that ought to be uncomfortable for anyone who assumes dispossession always yields a cheap labour force — the expropriation did not even deliver that. Gian Luca Podestà's work records the opposite: wages for local labour in the colony stayed *high*, because the population was thin on the ground and Eritreans showed little appetite for the work the Italian firms wanted done. Italy took the land and got neither farmers to work it nor a proletariat to hire.

What it got, in the end, was soldiers. Unable to put Italians onto Eritrean land, it took Eritreans off it — into the battalions, into the *bande*, into the barracks and the towns that grew around them. The *ascari* economy is not a supplement to the settlement of Italian Eritrea. **It is what the settlement of Italian Eritrea turned into when the settlers did not come.** That is the argument Modules 5 and 6 will have to carry, and it starts here, in an empty field.

Reading the settlement against the framework

One: the extraction fork needs a third branch, and it is set in the metropole.

The Libya study wrote the fork into the Field Manual, and it is a good fork: extraction-as-rate (a flow — harvest, tribute, labour-days) tends to equilibrium, because the extractor needs the producer alive and can ease the rate; extraction-as-dispossession (a stock — the land itself, taken whole for settlement) has no rate to ease, produces the revolt by its completion, and tends therefore toward the two stable ends of the dispossessed's acceptance of landlessness or their removal — Wolfe's logic of elimination.

Eritrea confirms the first half exactly. The taking was a stock; there was no rate; the revolt came on completion, in the person of Italy's own client; and Italy could not answer it by easing anything, because there was nothing to ease, and so answered it with Toselli's battalion.

But Eritrea then reaches **neither** of the fork's two stable ends. There was no acceptance of landlessness and there was no elimination. What happened instead is that **the settler never arrived**, and so the settler order aborted. Thirty families. And the fork, as written, has no branch for that.

So add it. **Dispossession tends to elimination only where the settler actually comes.** The stock-taking is a *bet on the metropole's willingness to emigrate to this particular colony*, and that willingness is not a constant — it is set by what the colony pays against what the settler's other options pay. In 1896 an Italian peasant could go to Asmara or to Buenos Aires; three hundred thousand went somewhere, and about two thousand had gone to Eritrea in eleven years. The bet failed. And when a stock-taking bet fails, the coloniser is left holding expropriated land, a revolt he provoked, a dead client, and no population to justify any of it — at which point he does not eliminate the native, because he now needs him. He **converts**: from taking the land to taking the man.

That is Eritrea's revision, and it is the exact hinge between this study and the Libya study. Same empire, same fork, same decade, opposite outcome — and the variable was not the conqueror's ferocity but whether his own poor would board the ship. Libya's dispossession ran to elimination because Italy sent a hundred thousand settlers to stand on the cleared ground. Eritrea's dispossession ran to an army because it sent thirty families.

Two: the settlement's legal fiction can be more selective than a study expects, and the selection is the strategy. The decree of 1893 nationalised everything and then, in practice and in the law's own exemptions, went hardest at *gulti* — the tenure of the Abyssinian nobility and the Orthodox Church, the two institutions whose allegiance could never be transferred — while leaving the *diesa* villages substantially in place. That is Divide, written as a land code: dispossess the class you cannot buy, spare the class whose sons you intend to enlist. It is also, precisely, why Eritrea had no general peasant war and Cyrenaica did.

Three: a settlement can be *undone*, and the framework should say so. The corpus has treated the settlement as the thing that gets made at the founding and then defended. Eritrea shows a settlement made, tested, and then *withdrawn from* by the metropole — Martini's abandonment of agrarian colonisation after Adwa is a real reversal, and it converted the colony's whole character. Add the question to Module 2: *did the settlement hold, or did the metropole abandon it, and what did the colony become instead?* Because what Eritrea became instead is the subject of everything that follows.

The land is still there. The thirty families are gone. And the men who could not get their fields back went, in their tens of thousands, to the recruiting sergeant — where they were, as the decrees of 1890 had already noted, more suitable and less costly.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. None is quoted verbatim in this module, and the absence is deliberate. I could not obtain the operative text of Royal Decree no. 23 of 19 January 1893, and I will not paraphrase a law into quotation marks; it is therefore reported here in substance — that it made the whole territory of the colony state property — on the authority of the scholarship, and its exact wording is flagged as a gap to be filled if the text can be found. The same applies, more sharply, to Bahta Hagos. Two proclamations attributed to him circulate very widely in English translation in secondary and popular accounts — that he was an avenger of rights trampled by the Italians, and that the Italians were seizing the people's land and should be driven out. I have not verified either against a primary text in Tigrinya or Italian, and so they appear here only as reported and in paraphrase, without quotation marks. A doubtful line is dropped, not guessed. Ferdinando Martini's description of Bahta, which likewise circulates in English on Eritrean sites, is omitted for the same reason: Martini's *Nell'Africa Italiana* (1891) is

public domain and the passage should be quoted from it directly, in Italian, when it can be consulted.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For the land regimes and the 1893 decree: Morten Jerven, Donatella Strangio and Jacob Weisdorf's review of Italy's colonisation of Eritrea, and behind it Sandra Fullerton Joireman on property rights in Ethiopia and Eritrea, Irma Taddia on Eritrean land policy, and Stefano Bellucci and Massimo Zaccaria on land and labour. For the expropriation figure of over four hundred thousand hectares, and for the settlement policy of 1890–95 as a project of Crispi and Franchetti: Tekeste Negash, *Italian Colonialism in Eritrea, 1882–1941*. For Franchetti's plan, its welfare-colonial character and its collapse: Stephen C. Bruner's study of Franchetti and Italian settlement in Eritrea. For local wages remaining high despite expropriation: Gian Luca Podestà. For the character of the Italian community as *notabiliare*: Nicola Labanca, who also supplies the estimate of about two thousand Italian settlers in Eritrea between 1885 and 1896. For Bahta Hagos's biography, his years as a *shifta* raiding Ras Alula, his service to Italy at Agordat, and the revolt of December 1894: the standard reference literature and the Italian and Eritrean accounts of the Battle of Halai, read against each other.

Contested figures, given as ranges. The expropriation is given at "over 400,000 hectares" on Negash's authority; I have found no independent corroboration of the exact figure and it should be treated as an order of magnitude. Bahta Hagos's birth is placed between 1839 and 1850; his force at Halai between 1,500 and 2,000; Toselli's column at about 1,500 with two guns; the Halai garrison at about 220; his death on 18 or 19 December 1894. The Italian settler families transplanted between 1891 and 1894 are given as "about thirty," with two families surviving on the plateau into the early 1930s; the experimental farms at Asmara, Godofelassi and Gura at around fifty hectares in total; Franchetti's endowment at 120,000 lire a year rising to 200,000, at a cost of some 4,242 lire per family settled. The Italian population of the colony is given at about 4,000 on the eve of the Great War and under 5,000 until 1930. The attribution of the 1887 rinderpest to Italian-imported cattle is stated, as in Module 1, as attributed rather than proven, and the human mortality of the *Kefu Qen* as an order of magnitude only.

MODULE 3

THE FIRST-BORN

The story Italy told, and the audience it was told to — a liberal parliament's promise of "fellow-citizens," a colony named the first-born of a nation not yet sure it was one, and the single hardest thing this robe ever had to do, which was to explain to its own believing public why the people it had come to civilise had just destroyed its army in the field.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

Who the story was for

A story of legitimacy is always aimed at somebody, and the first question about any such story is not whether it is true but who is meant to believe it — because the answer tells you whose belief the order actually needs, and an order never spends breath persuading people whose conviction buys it nothing.

For a colony the answer is not the conquered. The governor at Massawa did not require the Tigrinya peasant to think Italian rule rightful; the peasant's opinion secured nothing that the rifles had not already secured, and force does not pay for what it does not need. The story was for the people whose belief did the funding and the manning — the deputy voting the colonial budget, the taxpayer, and above all the family in a Lombard or Calabrian village whose son had been sent to the Red Sea and might not come back. Those people had to think the thing worth a life and a lira. So the robe of Italian Eritrea was cut for Italy, and to read it is to read what liberal Italy needed to tell itself about what it was doing on the far side of a sea.

And here the case turns strange, because the Italy doing the telling was itself only half-made, and its robe had a double task the older empires' robes did not. It had to justify the colony to the metropole — and it had to help build the metropole while doing so. A nation most of whose people could not read its language and were leaving it by the hundred thousand was, in the act of acquiring a colony, partly trying to become the kind of nation that had one. The robe was not only a justification laid over a conquest. It was, in part, an instrument for manufacturing the national feeling that owned the conquest.

The word in the founding pledge

The robe's plainest statement is the one already on the record from the colony's beginning, and it is worth setting down again because everything the colony later did is measured against it.

When the foreign minister Pasquale Stanislao Mancini rose in the Chamber in June 1882 to ask Italy to take over the bay of Assab, he told the deputies that Italians would come to the Red Sea not as *dominatori*, not as *tutori*, not as *innovatori* — not as rulers, not as guardians, not as innovators — *ma amici ed aiutatori a guidare i nostri nuovi concittadini a miglioramenti compresi e desiderati*: but as friends and helpers, guiding our new fellow-citizens toward improvements understood and desired.

Concittadini. Fellow-citizens. The word was chosen by a jurist who was, in his own scholarly field, a serious theorist of the rights of nations, and it was spoken in the chamber of a parliamentary monarchy that thought of itself as liberal. It is the whole robe of this colony in a single noun. Not subjects, not natives, not a conquered people — fellow-citizens, to be guided toward improvements they themselves would come to understand and want. It promises the gentlest thing a colonial power can promise: not domination but friendship, not rule but help, not innovation imposed but improvement desired.

Hold the word, because the study's method is to set the exact public promise beside the exact later act and leave the arithmetic to the reader. The state that called the Eritrean a fellow-citizen in 1882 would, within two generations, forbid him the freehold of land in his own country by the decree that made the colony Crown property; cap the schooling it offered him, by design, at the lowest grades; frame in law the marriages and the children that crossed the colour line; and build him a capital on whose finest avenue he could not live. Each of those is documented in its own module. The word *concittadini* is the promise. They are the performance. Nobody needs to be told the sum.

The name

The colony's name is the second text of its robe, and it does two things at once.

Crispi's decree of 1 January 1890 called the place *Eritrea*, from *Erythraea*, the ancient Greek for the Red Sea — *erythros*, red. The choice is not neutral and it is not decorative. To name a stretch of the Horn of Africa with a classical Mediterranean word is to file it, at the moment of its creation, under Rome — to say that Italy is not seizing a foreign

country but recovering a shore the ancient world already knew, that the newest nation in Europe is the oldest empire's heir. A country whose own unity was twenty years old and shaky reached past its own short history to a Roman one, and dressed a purchase and a famine-year occupation in a two-thousand-year-old name. The robe borrowed antiquity because the wearer had almost none.

And the second thing the name does is done by the epithet that attached itself to the colony and stuck: *la colonia primogenita* — the first-born colony. The first-born of what? Of an empire that in 1890 consisted of this single sparse territory and did not yet exist as anything to be first-born of. To call Eritrea the first-born is to assume the family — to speak as though the Italian empire were a settled fact awaiting its children, when in truth there was one child and no family. The word is aspiration wearing the grammar of accomplishment. It tells you, more precisely than any speech, what the robe was doing: not describing a great power's possession but conjuring the greatness that the possession was meant to prove.

The liberal difficulty

Every colonising power tells a civilising story, and it is easy to let them all blur into the same hypocrisy. The point worth holding is the specific shape of the difficulty a *liberal* Italy had, because the shape is what makes this robe distinctive and what makes it brittle.

The Italy of 1890 was a constitutional monarchy with an elected chamber, a free enough press, and a governing class that took the vocabulary of the Risorgimento seriously — liberty, nationhood, the self-determination of peoples, the throwing-off of foreign rule. It had made itself, within living memory, by expelling Austrian and Bourbon rulers in the name of a people's right to govern itself. That history is not decoration; it is the exact material the robe had to be cut from, and it cut badly, because a nation built on the principle that a people should not be ruled by a foreign power was now ruling foreign peoples. The colonial enterprise was attacked in Italy from the start, and not only on grounds of cost: radicals, socialists and republicans denounced it as a barbarising of Italian politics, a betrayal of the Risorgimento's own creed, and they said so in the Chamber and the press. The robe of Italian Eritrea had to be sewn in the teeth of a domestic opposition that could quote the nation's founding principles against it.

That is the two-way pull the older, frankly monarchical or frankly commercial empires felt less. A belief that has genuinely taken in an audience is not a lever the men on top pull at will; it is a constraint on them, because the audience will only keep believing so long as the rulers are seen to conform to the thing believed. Liberal Italy half-believed its own creed of liberty and nationhood — that belief was real *in the public* — and a real belief in the public is a leash on the government. It is why the colonial enterprise had to be continually justified rather than simply conducted, why the opposition could not be ignored, why every embarrassment in the colony became a parliamentary event. The robe had to keep facing home, and home was watching with the nation's own principles in its hand.

The thing this robe had to do that Libya's never did

Now the hardest task any colonial robe in this collection was ever set, and it is unique to this case.

A colonial civilising story rests on a single foundational claim: that the coloniser is the superior civilisation and the colonised the backward one, and that rule is the transfer of the first to the second. Everything else in the robe hangs off that claim. And on 1 March 1896, on a mountainside at Adwa, the people Italy had come to civilise destroyed an Italian army — killing, capturing and scattering a European force in a single day, in the largest defeat any European power suffered at African hands in the whole scramble for the continent.

Consider what that does to the robe, and to nothing else in the same way. A colonial defeat is not merely a military problem; it is a *doctrinal* one, because the whole justifying story said this could not happen. The backward do not defeat the advanced; the pupil does not annihilate the teacher; if they can, the entire premise of the civilising mission — the superiority that licenses the rule — is refuted in the field, in front of the only audience whose belief the colony needs. Libya's robe never faced this. Whatever the horrors of that later conquest, Italy won it, and a robe over a victory has an easy job. Eritrea's robe had to explain a rout — had to keep a believing metropolitan public convinced of Italian superiority the week after that public read that Italian superiority had been broken by Menelik's army.

Watch how the robe absorbs the blow, because the manoeuvre is the most revealing thing in the module. It does not concede the premise. It converts the defeat into a reason to *stay*.

The sequence is on the record and it is swift. Adwa broke Crispi's government; he resigned; in October 1896 the Treaty of Addis Ababa surrendered the Italian claim to a protectorate over Ethiopia and recognised Ethiopian independence, in exchange for Menelik's recognition of Italian Eritrea. Italy gave up the ambition that had produced the war — and kept the colony. And the reason it kept the colony, in the sources' own account, was not that the colony was worth keeping on any ledger; it was worth nothing on the ledger, as later modules will show it running for decades at a loss the metropole had to cover. Italy kept Eritrea, in the plain words of the historical accounts, so as not to further discredit itself before national and international opinion after the defeat of Adwa. The colony had to be held *because* the army had been beaten. Withdrawal would have made the humiliation total; retention converted a catastrophe into a possession retained with dignity. The robe took the single fact most fatal to it — we were beaten by the people we claimed to be raising — and turned it into the argument for permanence: precisely because we were beaten, we cannot be seen to leave.

That is a robe doing real, heavy, load-bearing work, and it is worth admiring as machinery even while naming it as fiction. It did not deny Adwa; denial was impossible, the dead were counted, the prisoners were in Ethiopian hands, the news was in every European paper. It reframed Adwa — from a refutation of Italian superiority into a wound to Italian honour that only staying could dress. And it worked. Italy stayed for another forty-five years.

What the robe left out, and where it went instead

A robe is defined as much by what it cannot say as by what it says, and this one had a silence at its centre that later modules make audible.

It could not say that the colony would enrich Italy, because it would not; the accounts ran red year after year and the metropole paid the difference. It could not say the colony would take Italy's surplus poor, because they would not go; the land stood empty of the settlers it had been justified by, and the peasants it was meant for sailed for Argentina instead. It could not, after Adwa, say that Italy was demonstrably the stronger civilisation, because a European army lay dead on an Ethiopian mountain. Strip those three away —

no profit, no settlement, no proven supremacy — and very little of the original justification is left standing.

What the robe kept, when those props were knocked out, was the one claim Adwa had actually *strengthened*: that Italy's honour required it to remain. The civilising mission narrowed, under the pressure of events, from a grand promise of improvement and settlement and gain into something much smaller and much more durable — a matter of not being seen to quit. And an order reduced to holding ground for honour's sake, over a population whose belief it never sought and never won, funded by a metropole it never repaid, is an order that has to be run rather than believed. The robe, having lost its content, becomes pure face — and face is maintained by administration, not conviction. This is the point at which the story of Italian Eritrea stops being about a mission and starts being about a machine, and the machine is what the rest of the study measures.

Reading the robe against the framework

Three findings, and the third is the one this module returns to the framework.

One: the colonial robe is cut for the metropole, and where the metropole is unformed, the robe helps make it. The belief the colony needed was never the Eritrean's; it was the Italian public's, because that public paid and manned the thing. Ordinary enough. What this case adds is the second turn: the metropolitan audience was itself only half-formed into a nation, and the robe was doing double duty — justifying the colony to Italy and helping assemble the Italy the colony belonged to. The naming reveals it. A country reaches past its own twenty-year history to a Roman one, and calls a single sparse territory the *first-born* of an empire that does not yet exist, because the robe is not describing a possession but conjuring the nationhood the possession is meant to prove.

Two: a genuinely held metropolitan belief is a leash, not just a lever, and a liberal metropole holds the shortest leash of all. The Risorgimento creed of liberty and self-government was real in the Italian public, and a real belief constrains the men who must perform to it. That is why the colony was permanently on trial at home, why the opposition could quote the nation's own founding principle back at it, why every colonial scandal became a parliamentary reckoning. An empire whose home creed is monarchy or commerce can rule abroad without contradiction; an empire whose home creed is *the right of peoples not to be ruled by foreigners* carries its own prosecution in its pocket. The

liberalism that was the robe's material was also its constraint. The lever and the leash were the same thread.

Three — and this is the revision: a colonial robe must survive military defeat by the colonised, and how it does so is a distinct and measurable operation the framework has not named. The other studies in this collection examine robes laid over conquests that succeeded. This one examines a robe that had to absorb a rout — the annihilation of the coloniser's army by the very people its story called backward — and remain standing. The operation it performed is precise and repeatable, and belongs in the Field Manual as a question to ask of any colony that lost a major engagement: *when the civilising story was refuted in the field, did the robe concede the premise, or convert the defeat?* Italy's robe converted it — refusing to admit that defeat by the colonised disproved the superiority that licensed the rule, and instead recasting the defeat as a wound to national honour that only continued rule could dress, so that the fact most fatal to the mission became the argument for its permanence. That manoeuvre — *defeat metabolised into obligation* — is how a civilising robe outlives the disproof of the thing it claims to be civilising. Name it, and look for it wherever a coloniser was beaten and stayed.

The word was *concittadini*: fellow-citizens, to be guided toward improvements they would come to want. The colony was the *first-born*, of a family not yet born. And when the fellow-citizens' cousins across the Mareb destroyed the Italian army, Italy did not leave the fellow-citizens it could no longer claim to be raising — it stayed, because leaving would have shamed it, and for forty-five more years the robe that had run out of everything else ran on that.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. The only phrase quoted verbatim in this module is Mancini's, from his speech to the Chamber of June 1882 presenting the bill on Assab — *non dominatori, non tutori, non innovatori... i nostri nuovi concittadini* — reproduced from the parliamentary record via the scholarly literature and quoted here at second hand from that reproduction, as flagged when it was first used in the opening landscape of this study. No other direct quotation appears, and the absence is deliberate. Ferdinando Martini's *Nell'Africa Italiana* (1891) and Francesco Crispi's parliamentary speeches on the colony are both public domain and both contain the fuller civilising-mission rhetoric this module describes; I have not been able to verify a specific passage of either against its

original text, and so I paraphrase the substance and quote nothing, rather than dress an unverified line in quotation marks. Those texts are the obvious place to strengthen this module, and the quotations should be drawn from them directly — Martini's own words on the Eritrean, and Crispi's on the mission — when they can be consulted.

Paraphrased modern scholarship and period framing, credited and not quoted. The naming of the colony from the Greek *erythros* and the decree of 1 January 1890 are established in the reference literature. The epithet *colonia primogenita* is period usage, contrasting Eritrea as the first-born with the later territories of Somalia and Libya. The account of domestic opposition to the colonial enterprise — conservatives on cost, radicals, socialists and republicans on principle, decrying a barbarising of Italian politics — is drawn from the Italian historical literature on the colony's early reception. The central factual claim of this module, that Italy retained Eritrea after Adwa specifically so as not to discredit itself further before national and international opinion, is drawn from the standard narrative accounts of the aftermath of the 1896 defeat and the Treaty of Addis Ababa; it is the historians' framing, paraphrased, and it is load-bearing, so it is named as their judgement rather than asserted as fact.

Contested figures, given as ranges. Adwa's scale is treated fully in the module on information and suppression, where the Wuchale mistranslation that produced the war is set out; here only the fact of a decisive Italian defeat on 1 March 1896 and the Treaty of Addis Ababa of October 1896 are used, both uncontested. Italian illiteracy and emigration figures, used to establish the unformed character of the metropolitan audience, are given as in the opening landscape of this study: illiteracy around seventy per cent at the early censuses, emigration in the hundreds of thousands annually by the later 1880s, both as orders of magnitude drawn from the standard demographic literature.

MODULE 4

THE NAMES OF THOSE WHO MADE ITALY GREAT

What the colony taught, and what it refused to teach — a school stopped at the fourth grade by design, a curriculum that told the pupil to become a propagandist of hygiene and to learn, of all human history, only the names of the men who made Italy great, and a thousand-year-old Christian formation the colony left entirely alone because it had decided never to compete for the highland's soul; and the finding that in this colony the counter-formation did not resist the coloniser's story but simply occupied the ground the coloniser declined to enter.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

The question, and why the answer is a ceiling

Formation is the machinery by which an order teaches the people under it to experience that order as the way the world is — the schooling, the language, the calendar, the shrine, the story of who is fit to rule and who to serve. It is the most powerful instrument any order has, because a belief installed early enough stops feeling like a belief and starts feeling like a fact, and a population that polices its own obedience from conviction is the cheapest population there is to hold.

So the framework's question for this module is simple: what did the colony form its subjects to believe, and how? And Italian Eritrea returns an answer that is not a doctrine but a *limit* — a ceiling, set deliberately, on how much of an Eritrean the colony would consent to make. The whole of the colonial bend is legible in that ceiling, and the module's task is to read it exactly, from the coloniser's own words, and then to explain why the ground the coloniser refused to form did not stay empty.

The fourth grade

Begin with the fact and then with the man who wrote it down, because the fact alone can be mistaken for neglect, and it was not neglect. It was policy.

Under Italian rule an Eritrean child could attend school to the fourth elementary grade and no further. The ceiling was formalised as the colony matured — an order that no native pupil be promoted beyond the fifth elementary class came in the 1920s, and under the racial tightening after 1936 the limit was pushed down further still, to the third grade — but the principle was there from early on and it was explicit: the colony would give the Eritrean enough schooling to be useful to it and would stop precisely at the point where more schooling might make him dangerous to it. After about sixty years of administration by a European power, Italy left Eritrea, on the testimony of the education literature, without a single Eritrean university graduate.

Now the words, because this is a module about formation and the evidence for what a formation intends is what its architects say it is for. Andrea Festa, the director of education in the colony, set down what the school was to have produced by the end of a pupil's fourth and final year. The Eritrean student, he wrote, should by then be able to speak Italian moderately well; should know the four arithmetical operations within normal limits; should be a convinced propagandist of the principles of hygiene; and — the clause that is the entire module — *in history he should know only the names of those who have made Italy great.*

Read that clause slowly, because it is one of the most candid sentences in the whole collection. It does not say the pupil should learn Italian history; it says he should know *only the names* of the men who made Italy great — not the events, not the causes, not the arguments, and above all not his own history, of which he is to learn nothing. History as a subject is replaced by a list of Italian names to be admired. The pupil is to leave school able to serve — he can speak the master's language, keep simple accounts, and carry the master's ideas about cleanliness into his village — and unable to think against the order, because he has been given no past of his own to think from and no history as anything but a roll of Italian greatness. This is not a failure to educate. It is education performing exactly its designed function: to form a servant and foreclose a citizen, and to stop at the line between the two.

The purpose was stated as plainly by others as by Festa. The first civil governor, Ferdinando Martini, is recorded in the scholarship as having grasped early that an educated Eritrean was a threat to the colony — that education tending toward intellectual parity with the Italian would undermine the whole basis of colonial rule and make it unduly expensive, if not impossible, to maintain — and as having shaped his policy

toward native schooling accordingly, while attending energetically to the schooling of the settlers' children. A later governor, Salvago Raggi, softened the line to the extent of wanting a small trained native elite for junior posts in the administration, and opened a school at Keren in 1911 for the sons of Muslim chiefs and notables, modelled on the British colonial schools in the Sudan and Egypt. But the shape never changed: schooling calibrated to produce interpreters, clerks, typists, telegraph operators, book-keepers, medical orderlies, native teachers of the lowest grades — and, above all, soldiers. The colony would form the Eritrean into an instrument and would not form him into a man who could replace an Italian, because forming him into that man would have meant admitting him, and admitting him was the one thing the order could not afford to do.

Why withholding formation is the tell of the whole order

Here is the point on which this module turns, and it needs to be put precisely because it inverts the intuition one brings to it.

An order that means to rule a people permanently and cheaply has every reason to form them — to teach them its language, its story, its sense of who ought to rule, until they hold that order up themselves from conviction and the garrison can go home. Formation is how the expensive rule of the sword is converted, over generations, into the cheap rule of belief. A conqueror who was confident of his story, and who intended his order to become the natives' own settled world, would *pour* formation into them, because a fully formed subject is a subject who no longer has to be watched.

Italy did the opposite. It withheld formation from the majority — capped the school, refused the higher grades, left the colony without a single graduate — and the refusal is the most eloquent evidence in the study of what the colonial order actually was. An order withholds formation for one reason: because to form the subject fully would be to make him the equal the order exists to deny he is. The ceiling at the fourth grade is the caste line of the colony written as a school policy. You may learn to serve; you may not learn enough to be admitted; and the order will pay the price of that refusal — a subject who obeys from force and calculation rather than conviction, who must therefore be watched — because the alternative price, admitting him, is one it will not pay.

This is why the colony ran on surveillance rather than belief, and the connection is not rhetorical, it is mechanical. A formed population believes and is cheap to hold; an

unformed population calculates and must be watched. Italy chose, deliberately, the second, because the first would have required treating the Eritrean as a person who could be fully made into the colony's own — and the whole architecture of the colony, from the land decree that barred him from freehold to the marriage law that policed his blood, existed to establish that he could not. The capped school is that same refusal, applied to the mind. Surveillance was not a failure of the colony's formation project. It was the necessary running cost of not having one.

And the contrast that proves it lies within the same fifty years. When the British took the colony in 1941 and set about actually schooling Eritreans, the response the sources record is a rush — villagers building schoolhouses with their own hands and hired stone, poor families selling a sheep or a cow to fund a share, fifty-nine villages raising their own schools within a few years, adults clamouring for the classes they had been denied. The appetite for formation had been there the whole time. The Italian order had simply refused to feed it, because feeding it meant admitting the people it fed. The demand did not have to be created; it had only to be stopped being suppressed. That is the tell, stated as sharply as the record allows: the colony that would not teach was not a colony that found its subjects uneducable. It was a colony that found educating them intolerable.

The formation the colony did fund: the settler and the soldier

The colony was not indifferent to formation as such. It spent freely on it — for two populations, and the two tell you exactly what the order valued.

It formed the settler's child completely. Schooling was compulsory for Italian children in the colony to the age of sixteen; the full metropolitan curriculum was used; and by the 1920s and 1930s Asmara had a *liceo*, a technical institute, a teacher-training institute — a complete educational ladder, from first grade to the threshold of university, for a settler community that never exceeded a few tens of thousands. The order that would not carry an Eritrean past the fourth grade carried the settler's son to the doorstep of a degree. Two ladders, one reaching the sky and one sawn off at the fourth rung, in the same small country, is the caste structure of the colony rendered as pedagogy.

And it formed the Eritrean soldier — not in a school but in a barracks, and this is the formation that mattered most, because it was the one the colony actually needed. The thing the order required from the Eritrean majority was not belief and not skill but service

under arms, and the barracks supplied a formation for exactly that: drill, the regimental hierarchy with its permanent Italian ceiling, the graded pay, the uniform, the pension, the esprit de corps of the *ascari*. A man could not rise past the fourth grade in a schoolroom or past the rank the colour bar fixed in a regiment, but the regiment gave him a wage, a standing, an identity, and a ladder — short, capped, but real — that the schoolhouse was forbidden to give. The colony withheld the formation that would have made the Eritrean a citizen and supplied instead the formation that made him a soldier, because the soldier was what the order was for. The school was capped at the fourth grade; the army, in the years of the great expansion, would take four in every ten eligible men. The two facts are one policy. The colony formed the Eritrean precisely as far as it needed him and not one grade further, and what it needed him for was the barracks, not the desk.

The ground the colony refused to enter

Now the recursion, and it is the deepest thing in this module.

A colonial order that withholds its own formation from the majority leaves a space — the whole interior life of the conquered, their sense of who they are and what is sacred and what the world is made of — and that space does not stay empty. It is already occupied, and it was occupied long before Italy came, by a formation so old and so complete that its origin as a built thing had been forgotten entirely.

The Tigrinya highlander was among the most thoroughly formed human beings anywhere in this collection. His formation was the Orthodox Tewahedo Church, and it went to the bottom of him. His liturgy was in Ge'ez, a language a millennium and a half old, sung in a chant tradition ascribed to the sixth-century deacon Yared. His year was scored by the fasts and feasts of that Church, a calendar older than any European state. Every parish had its school, where boys learned the Ge'ez alphabet and the Psalter by heart, and from those schools rose the clergy and, above them, the *debtera* — the lay scholars, masters of sacred poetry and chant and manuscript, the intellectual class of the highland, who documented land tenure and composed the histories and staffed the reach of the Church into every village. The sacred history at the summit of it all told that the kings of this world descended from Solomon and that the Ark of the Covenant itself rested in Aksum, so that the highlander's faith, his script, his calendar, his land law, and his idea of legitimate kingship were a single seamless formation with its apex in a sacred monarchy.

This was itself a former conquest, naturalised to the point of invisibility — Christianity had come to Aksum in the fourth century as a top-down adoption by a king, exactly the kind of imposed order that, given enough centuries, cools into the simple furniture of reality until no one experiences it as anything but the way the world has always been. Naming it as built does not make it a trick; it makes it the most successful formation on the whole board, a conquest that took so completely that after a millennium and a half no one alive could feel the seam. And that fully-taken formation was sitting on exactly the ground Italy declined to enter.

Watch what follows, because it is the whole mechanism of this colony stated in one move. Italy did not try to displace the Orthodox formation. It did not build a rival mass school to teach the highlander a new story of who he was; it capped its schools at the fourth grade and taught the handful who attended the names of great Italians. It did not suppress the Church, or the Ge'ez liturgy, or the calendar, or the *debtera*. It tolerated Islam in the lowlands and it left Orthodoxy alone in the highlands, and it backed a Catholic mission effort that made real inroads in some districts but never remotely threatened the Orthodox hold on the plateau. The colony that withheld its own formation from the Eritrean thereby *left the old formation in complete possession of him.* The highlander went on being formed, thoroughly, every day of the colonial period — by the Church, in Ge'ez, on the old calendar, into the old sense of a sacred order — because the coloniser had decided not to compete for that ground.

So the counter-formation of this colony is not, as the framework's template half-expects, a resistance mounted against the coloniser's story. There was barely a coloniser's story on that ground to resist. The Orthodox formation of the highland did not fight the Italian formation and win; it simply *stood where the Italian formation refused to stand.* It held the field by walkover. And that is the exact meaning of the colonial bend in this case: the coloniser's belief never took with the conquered because the coloniser never tried to make it take — he withheld the formation that might have carried it — and so the conquered went on believing, cheaply and completely, the thing they had believed before he came. The old order ran on conviction; the new order ran on a wage and a rifle and a watchful eye; and the reason the new order had to run that way is that it had ceded, without a contest, the one territory on which conviction is grown.

Reading formation against the framework

Three findings, and the third is the revision.

One: withheld formation is not neglect but a positive act, and it is the clearest single tell of a colonial order. The intuition is that a permanent ruler forms his subjects until they believe and hold the order up for free. This colony did the reverse, deliberately, in writing — capped the school at the fourth grade, forbade the higher grades, left the country without a graduate — and the reversal is diagnostic. An order withholds formation for exactly one reason: because to form the subject fully is to make him the equal the order exists to deny he is. So the ceiling on the school is the caste line of the colony rendered as pedagogy, and the surveillance the colony ran on is not a failure of its formation project but the running cost of refusing to have one. The Field Manual should ask of every colony, plainly: *how far up did they let the native learn, and where they stopped him, what were they refusing to admit?*

Two: the barracks was the real school, and the two ladders are one policy. The colony did form the Eritrean — as a soldier, in a barracks, with a drill and a hierarchy and a capped rank and a wage — while refusing to form him as a citizen in a classroom with an uncapped grade. It formed the settler's child to the doorstep of a university and the native's son to the fourth grade and the recruiting sergeant. Set the sawn-off school beside the open barracks and the caste structure of the whole colony is visible in what it chose to teach whom: the Eritrean was to be made exactly as much as the army required and not one grade more, because the army was what he was for.

Three — the revision: a counter-formation need not resist; it can simply occupy the ground the coloniser vacates, and this is the normal case wherever the coloniser withholds his own formation. The framework's template treats the native counter-formation as a *resistance* — clergy, schools, calendar, holy places mobilised against the coloniser's story. This case shows the more basic mechanism underneath that one. Where the coloniser declines to compete for the interior of the conquered — withholds his own formation because forming the subject would mean admitting him — the native formation does not have to win a contest, because none is offered. It holds the field by default. The thousand-year-old Orthodox order of the highland did not defeat an Italian formation; it occupied the ground on which Italy refused to build one. And this is precisely why the colonial order stays expensive to the end: the cheap rule of belief was available on that plateau — the population was as formable as any in the world, and

rushed to the schools the moment they were offered — but it was available only to a power willing to form the Eritrean into its own, and the whole logic of the colony was that it would not. It left the conviction to the old order and kept the sword for itself. An order that will not form its subjects cannot be believed by them, and an order that is not believed must forever be watched. The ceiling at the fourth grade and the watchtower over the district are the same decision, seen twice.

The pupil was to leave school knowing, of all the human past, only the names of those who had made Italy great. Of the men who had made *his own* world — the king descended from Solomon, the deacon who wrote the chant, the scholars who kept the Ge'ez — he was to learn nothing in the colony's school. He learned them anyway, in the other school, the one in every parish that the colony had decided it was cheaper to leave standing than to fight. And so he remained, through fifty years of Italian rule, formed by Aksum and merely policed by Rome.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. The one clause quoted verbatim is from Andrea Festa, director of education in the colony, on what the Eritrean pupil should know by the end of his fourth year — that in history he should know only the names of those who have made Italy great — reproduced in the Eritrean educational-history literature (compiled by Resoum Kidane from Taye's *A Historical Survey of the State of Education in Eritrea*, 1990) and quoted here at second hand from that reproduction, which is flagged because it is a reproduction in a modern secondary compilation and not Festa's original text consulted directly; the wording should be verified against Festa's own publication before it is relied on further. The grade ceilings — fourth grade as the general limit, the order against promotion beyond the fifth class in the 1920s, and the reduction toward the third grade after 1936 — are given from the same educational literature, which itself cites Taye and Trevaskis; they are consistent across independent accounts but the exact dates and decree numbers are not established here and are given as the literature reports them.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For Martini's understanding that native education threatened the colony and would make rule unduly expensive, and for Salvago Raggi's contrasting wish for a small administrative elite and the Keren school of 1911 modelled on British schools in Sudan and Egypt: Tekeste Negash, *Italian Colonialism in Eritrea*, as transmitted through the educational-history literature.

For the settler educational ladder in Asmara — the compulsory schooling of Italian children to sixteen, the *liceo*, the technical and teacher-training institutes: the standard accounts of Italian schooling in the colony. For the British-era rush to schooling — villages building their own schoolhouses, families selling livestock to fund them, dozens of villages raising schools within a few years: the same compiled educational history, drawing on Taye, Trevaskis and Pankhurst; the enthusiasm is well attested across these accounts even where individual figures vary. For the Orthodox Tewahedo formation — the Ge'ez liturgy, the Yaredic chant, the parish schools teaching the alphabet and Psalter, the *debtera* as the highland's lay scholarly class, and the fourth-century royal adoption of Christianity at Aksum: the standard reference literature on the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Church and its traditional education, paraphrased.

Contested figures, given as ranges. School enrolments for Eritreans in the late 1930s are given in the literature at around 3,000 to 4,200 pupils across roughly twenty government native schools on the eve of the Ethiopian war; these are used only to establish scale. The claim that Italy left Eritrea without a single native university graduate after some sixty years is drawn from the educational-history literature and is repeated consistently there; it is stated as that literature's finding. The proportion of eligible Eritrean men under arms at the height of the mobilisation for the Ethiopian war is given as about forty per cent, from Tekeste Negash's figures, and is treated fully in the modules on the cost column and on plurality; it is used here only to set the capped school beside the open barracks.

MODULE 5

WHY THEY DID NOT WALK AWAY

The ledger every subject carries — the benefit of complying, the belief that it is right, the cost the state can inflict, and the exit to something better — run for two different men: the Eritrean whose belief in the Italian order was never grown and who complied anyway, and the Italian peasant whose belief was courted and who walked away regardless; and the finding that where belief is thin the state must buy compliance with the other three columns, and that the one column it could set for the African and could not set for the Italian was the exit.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

The ledger

Every person under every order runs, consciously or not, a single sum, and the whole art of ruling cheaply is arranging for that sum to come out on the side of compliance without the ruler having to pay much to make it do so. The sum has four terms. On the side of complying: the *benefit* the arrangement gives you — a wage, protection, a place — and the *belief* that the arrangement is right, that your obedience is owed and not merely extracted. On the side of resisting or leaving: the *cost* the state can inflict on you if you defy it, and the *exit* — whether there is a better arrangement you could walk to instead.

The cheapest of these four terms, by a wide margin, is belief. A subject who holds the order to be just needs almost nothing spent on him; he polices himself, obeys when no one is watching, and feels righteous doing it. This is why every durable order works so hard to be believed: belief is the term that costs the ruler nothing to maintain once it has taken, because the subject maintains it for him. Where belief is thick, the other three columns can be left nearly empty — little benefit need be offered, little cost need be threatened, and the exit can be left open, because the subject does not want to take it.

Where belief is thin, the sum will not balance on its own, and the ruler must make it balance by spending on the other three. He can raise the *benefit* — pay the subject enough that compliance is worth his while. He can raise the *cost* — build the watchtower, the prison, the punitive column, so that defiance is too dangerous. Or he can foreclose the *exit* — arrange that there is nowhere better to go, so that the subject stays for lack of an alternative even though he is neither paid nor convinced. And the tell of an order that has failed to be believed is precisely that you can see it spending, visibly and permanently, on these three — because an order that had belief would not need to.

This module runs that ledger for the two men who lived under Italian Eritrea, because they sat in different rows of it, and the difference between their sums is the whole structure of the colony. One was the Eritrean, whose belief in the Italian order was never even solicited. The other was the Italian common man, whose belief was courted assiduously. And the paradox that organises everything below is that the first complied and the second did not.

The Eritrean ledger: thin belief, and why there was no constant revolt

Start with the term that was empty from the beginning. The Italian order made no attempt to be believed by the Eritrean — it withheld the schooling that might have formed him into its own, capped his learning at the fourth grade, and left the whole interior of his life to the thousand-year-old Orthodox order it had decided not to compete with. So the belief column, for the Eritrean, was blank. He did not think Italian rule rightful, because nothing had ever been done to make him think so, and the order did not care whether he did, because his conviction bought it nothing his rifles had not already bought.

By the ledger, an order that has abandoned the belief column over a whole population should face constant revolt or constant flight. It faced neither. The highland was, for most of the colonial period, quiet — not converted, not content, but compliant. The framework's question is exactly the right one to press here: if they did not believe, why did they not rise, and why did they not leave? The answer is that Italy paid for the silence out of the other three columns, and it is worth seeing precisely which column did which work, because the mix is the signature of this colony.

The benefit column, for the slice that mattered. Italy could not make the Eritrean believe, so for the men it actually needed it made compliance *pay*. The instrument was the wage, and the wage was real. An ordinary *ascari* drew a cash salary; a native non-commissioned officer, a *shumbashi*, drew on the order of two hundred lire a month in the interwar years — a sum to weigh against the fact that a Sicilian day-labourer in 1902 earned about twenty-five American cents for twelve hours' work, and that the real wage of an Italian labourer sat barely above bare subsistence for the whole period. On top of the salary came the things that bind a man to a paymaster over years: allowances that rose with service, the uniform and the standing it conferred, and after 1950 a pension — small, but a pension, paid by a foreign state decades after the flag came down. The colonial army became, in the plain finding of the economic historians, the single largest employer in the colony and the main engine of social mobility within it; men enrolled, in the phrase one historian took from their own accounts, to fight for a piece of bread, and the veterans' letters show them saving the wage toward the one thing they wanted more than bread, which was land. This is the benefit column filled deliberately and precisely, for the recruited slice and not for the whole population — because the order did not need the whole population to comply out of benefit, only the slice that carried the rifles.

The cost column, for everyone else. For those outside the wage, compliance was held by the credible threat of force, and the threat was not idle. Two general officers had told a parliamentary commission in 1891 that they had ordered men killed in secret; the punitive column that could burn a village or hang a suspected rebel was a standing fact; and the surveillance that watched the district was permanent. Formation withheld leaves a population that must be watched rather than trusted, and the watching is the running cost of the empty belief column. But — and this is the distinctive thing about Eritrea — the cost column here did far less work than it would have to do in a colony where the other columns were emptier. Italy did not need to terrorise the highland into stillness, because it had two cheaper columns doing most of the holding: a wage for the recruited, and a foreclosed exit for the rest.

The exit column, and why it was already shut. Here is the term that made the Eritrean ledger balance almost for free, and the order had almost no hand in setting it — it inherited it, already shut, from the society it conquered. Ask the framework's blunt question: why did the peasant not simply walk away to a better arrangement? Because for the highland cultivator there was no walking away. His right to land ran through his

membership of a particular village and his descent from the ancestors who had settled it; leave the village and he did not carry a title with him, because he had no title anywhere else — to depart was to become landless in the whole world. The plateau was a pen the coloniser found already built, built by the tenure system of the people in it. And on the one side where a man *could* physically flee — south and west, across the Mareb into Tigray — the alternative on offer was worse than what he was fleeing: a Tigray that through the late 1880s and early 1890s was in the grip of the great famine that killed perhaps a third of the population of the region, and then a war of chiefs, and then the reach of an Ethiopian emperor whose own governors had been the resented overlords the highland remembered. The exit was foreclosed twice over — by a tenure that made leaving the village ruinous, and by a neighbourhood that offered nothing better to leave *for*. A subject who is neither paid nor convinced will still comply if he has nowhere better to go, and the highland Eritrean, for most of the colonial period, had nowhere better to go.

Put the three filled columns together and the quiet is explained without a single ounce of belief in it. The men Italy needed were paid; the men it did not need were watched; and none of them had an exit worth taking. That is a compliant population held entirely by benefit, cost, and foreclosed exit, with the belief column blank throughout — which is to say, the most expensive possible way to hold a country, chosen because the cheap way, forming the subject into a believer, would have meant admitting him, and admitting him was the one thing the order existed to refuse.

Bahta Hagos: the ledger when a column collapses

The natural experiment that proves the ledger is the revolt this study has already met from the settlement side, read now from the compliance side.

Bahta Hagos was the recruited slice in person — a Christian highlander whom Italy had armed, salaried, and raised to the Abyssinian rank of *Dejazmach*, who had fought for Italy against the Mahdists. For him the benefit column was full and the belief column was, as for every Eritrean, empty; he served Italy not because he thought Italian rule rightful but because Italian rule paid and because it removed the Tigrayan overlords he had spent his life fighting. His compliance was a pure benefit-and-exit calculation, and it held exactly as long as the benefit held.

Then Italy reached for his land. The expropriations ran across his province; the demand went out that his men surrender their rifles. In ledger terms, Italy was simultaneously collapsing his benefit column — taking the land that was the point of the wage — and destroying his exit by disarming him, which is to say removing his capacity to resist or bargain. When both moved at once against a man whose belief column had always been empty, the sum flipped in an instant, and he rose. December 1894: the province called out, the telegraph cut, Akele Guzai declared independent. Within days he was dead, killed by the same army that had paid him.

The lesson is precise and it generalises to the whole colony. Where compliance rests on benefit rather than belief, it is only as stable as the benefit, and it can be flipped the moment the ruler is seen to take back what the benefit was for. A believing subject will forgive his ruler a great deal, because his obedience was never conditional on payment. A subject who complies for a wage will forgive nothing once the wage is betrayed, because his obedience was *only ever* the payment. Italy ran a whole colony on benefit-and-exit rather than belief, which made it cheap in quiet years — and left it, always, one broken bargain away from a rising. Bahta Hagos is what that structure does when a column collapses, shown once, early, so the colony could see it.

The Italian ledger: thick belief, and why he walked away anyway

Now the second man, and the reversal that is the heart of the module.

The Italian common man was the one whose belief the colony actually courted. The whole robe of the enterprise — the promise of fellow-citizens to be guided, the naming of the place as the first-born of an empire, the civilising mission preached in the Chamber and the press — was aimed at him, because his was the belief that funded and manned the thing. And to a real degree it took: enough Italians believed in the imperial project to vote its budgets, cheer its flags, and mourn its dead as martyrs, and the young nation half-assembled itself around exactly that belief. By the logic of the ledger, a man whose belief column is full should comply readily — should go where the order needs him to go.

The order needed him to go to Eritrea. It had taken four hundred thousand hectares of highland to put him on. And he did not go.

Run his ledger and see why the full belief column could not move him. Belief that the empire was glorious is one thing; the benefit column of actually emigrating to Eritrea was another, and it was empty. The colony paid the settler no better than home and often worse; the land was hard, distant, and — as the famine years and Adwa had advertised across every front page — dangerous. And his *exit* column, unlike the Eritrean's, was wide open. The Italian peasant weighing whether to move was not choosing between Eritrea and staying poor in Calabria; he was choosing between Eritrea and Buenos Aires, between Eritrea and New York, between Eritrea and São Paulo — destinations that paid visibly, immediately, better, where kin had already gone and could pull him after. Between 1876 and the Great War something on the order of nine million Italians left the country, the overwhelming majority for the Americas. In the single year 1888 more than two hundred thousand sailed; in 1896, the year of Adwa, some three hundred thousand went. Against that tide Italy settled in Eritrea, across the whole liberal period, about two thousand people, and put onto its four hundred thousand expropriated hectares about thirty farming families, of whom two remained a generation later.

So the man whose belief was cultivated exercised his exit, and the man whose belief was never sought had his exit foreclosed — and that single asymmetry, more than any difference of conviction or coercion, is why the colony took the shape it took. Belief, it turns out, is a weak mover against a strong exit. The Italian believed in the empire and boarded a ship for Argentina, because belief in a project is not the same as benefit from joining it, and when the exit to something better is open, benefit wins. The colony could preach to the Italian but it could not close his exit, because he was a citizen with a passport and a world of better-paying shores, and no decree could keep him from the boat.

The one column the empire could set for one man and not the other

Lay the two ledgers side by side and the deepest finding of the module stands out, and it is a finding about power, not about either people.

The same empire faced two men. For the African it could not fill the belief column — that would have meant admitting him — so it filled the benefit column for the slice it needed, leaned on the cost column for the rest, and relied above all on an exit that was already shut. For the Italian it *could* fill the belief column, and did, but could not fill the

benefit column of going to Eritrea, and could not close the exit that drained him to the Americas. And the decisive difference between the two ledgers is the exit column, because it is the one column the empire could set for the one man and not for the other.

Italy could foreclose the African's exit. It did not even have to build the foreclosure — the *diesa* tenure and the famine-wracked interior had built it — but it could rely on it, tax against it, recruit against it, and it did. Italy could *not* foreclose the Italian's exit. A sovereign state may do almost anything to a colonial subject and very little to keep a citizen from emigrating; the Italian peasant's freedom to sail for Buenos Aires was a freedom the state had neither the will nor the power to revoke. And so the colony that had been justified as an outlet for Italy's surplus poor could not make its own poor come, while the colony that could never make the African believe could always make him stay.

That is why Eritrea armed Eritreans instead of settling Italians, stated now in the terms of the ledger rather than the terms of the land. The empire went where the exit was closed. It could hold the man whose exit it controlled and could not hold the man whose exit it did not, and so it built its whole order on the first man — took him as soldier, watched him as subject, paid the slice it needed and penned the rest — because he was the one who could not leave. The colonial order flows, in the end, toward whichever population the ruler can deny an exit to. Italy could deny it to the Eritrean and not to the Italian, and everything else followed.

Reading the cost column against the framework

Three findings, and the third is the revision.

One: compliance is a four-term sum, and thin belief is paid for out of the other three — visibly. The Eritrean highland was quiet for decades with the belief column blank, and it was quiet because Italy filled the benefit column for the recruited slice, held the cost column over the rest, and relied on an exit that was foreclosed by inherited tenure and a ruined hinterland. This is the mechanism the whole study has been pointing at, stated as an accounting identity: an order that cannot be believed must *buy* compliance with wage, threat, and closed exit, and the permanent visible spending on those three — the salaries, the garrisons, the surveillance — is the measurable tell of the empty belief column. Belief is the term that costs nothing once it takes; everything Italy spent, it spent because it had chosen not to have that term.

Two: benefit-bought compliance is stable only while the benefit holds, and collapses the instant it is withdrawn. A subject who obeys from belief will forgive a betrayal; a subject who obeys from a wage will not, because his obedience *was* the wage. Italy ran the colony on benefit-and-exit rather than belief, which bought quiet cheaply in ordinary years and left the order permanently one broken bargain from revolt — a fragility with no cure short of the belief the order refused to grow. Bahta Hagos is the demonstration: collapse the benefit column and destroy the exit of a man whose belief column was always empty, and the sum flips to revolt in days. Every intermediary the colony bought carried that same switch.

Three — the revision: of the four terms, the exit column is the one the coloniser's power over it differs most sharply between subject and citizen, and the colony flows toward the population whose exit can be closed. The framework treats exit as one variable among the cost-column dials. This case shows it is the *decisive* one in a colonial setting, because it is the term on which the coloniser's leverage splits cleanest along the caste line. Over the colonial subject the state has near-total power to foreclose exit — by tenure, by pass-law, by the sheer poverty of the alternatives — and near-total power is what Italy had over the Eritrean, mostly by inheritance. Over its own citizen the state has almost none: it can preach to him, but it cannot keep him off the emigrant ship, and Italy could not. So a colonial order will tend to be built on whichever population the ruler can deny an exit to, and against whichever he cannot. Italy could hold the African it could not convince and could not hold the Italian it had convinced, and the entire architecture of the colony — armed natives, absent settlers, a promised outlet for emigration that emigration ignored — is the working-out of that one asymmetry. The Field Manual should therefore ask of every colony, first among the cost-column questions: *whose exit could the ruler actually close, and whose could he not* — because the answer predicts, better than belief or benefit or force, which population the order will end up made of.

They did not walk away, the Eritreans, because they had nowhere to walk to and the men among them who mattered were paid to stay. They did walk away, the Italians, in their millions, because the world was open to them and paid better than the first-born colony ever could. The empire could shut the one door and not the other, and it built its house against the door it could shut.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this module; the figures below are drawn from modern scholarship and are given as such. Where a phrase from the sources is used — soldiers enrolling to fight for "a piece of bread" — it renders the title and argument of a modern scholarly work (De Cola) and is attributed to that work, not quoted as a period document. The *ascari* pay figures, the veterans' letters, and the "working for bread and working for land" saving strategy should be checked against the archival correspondence De Cola reproduces before any single figure is relied on as exact.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For *ascari* wages and the structure of colonial military labour — the cash salary, the roughly two-hundred-lire monthly pay of a native NCO against the far higher pay of Italian ranks, the allowances, and the postwar pension: Alessandro De Cola's doctoral study of military labour and monetary history in Eritrea (Bologna, 2021), and Alessandro Volterra, *Sudditi coloniali: ascari eritrei 1935–1941*. For the army as the colony's largest employer and principal engine of social mobility, and for wage labour and mobility more broadly: Stefano Bellucci and Massimo Zaccaria, and Uoldelul Chelati Dirar. For the roughly forty per cent mobilisation of adult men at the height of the Ethiopian-war recruitment, and the colonial-army figures (about 5,990 under arms in 1912; about 60,200 in 1935): Tekeste Negash, *Italian Colonialism in Eritrea*. For the *diesa* and *resti* tenures that foreclosed the highlander's exit: the land-tenure literature drawn on in the settlement module of this study (Jerven, Strangio and Weisdorf; Joireman; Taddia). For Italian real wages near subsistence across the period (a welfare ratio of roughly 1.2 to 1.6 against London's 7 to 8): the economic-history literature on the Italian regional divide (Federico, Nuvolari, Vasta and others). For the scale and destinations of Italian emigration — on the order of nine million departures between 1876 and 1914, over 200,000 in 1888, some 300,000 in 1896, overwhelmingly to the Americas: the standard demographic literature.

Contested figures, given as ranges. The *shumbashi* salary is given as "on the order of" two hundred lire a month, the Italian junior-officer pay it is contrasted with as exceeding two thousand, and an Italian postal clerk's pay as around three hundred, all from the same colonial-military literature and all as orders of magnitude rather than exact and constant figures across a fifty-year period of significant currency change. The Sicilian day-wage of about twenty-five cents for twelve hours in 1902 is a single reported figure used

illustratively. Emigration totals vary by source and by whether return migration is netted out; the figures here are the standard round numbers and are used only to establish the overwhelming scale of the open exit against the roughly two thousand Italians who settled in Eritrea before 1896 and the about thirty farming families placed on the expropriated highland. The famine mortality in the trans-Mareb interior is given, as elsewhere in this study, as "up to a third" of the regional population, an order of magnitude resting on no census. Bahta Hagos's revolt and death (December 1894) are treated with their sources in the settlement module of this study.

MODULE 6

THE ONLY CROP THAT PAID

What Italy actually took out of the colony it was told would pay — a ledger that ran red for fifty years and was covered from Rome, a export list of mother-of-pearl and hides too trivial to notice, a census the governor deliberately never took because it did not matter what the natives owned; and the finding that where a colony has nothing worth extracting, the coloniser extracts the one thing it does have — its men — and ships them out to fight the wars that pay for holding it.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

The question, and the empty answer

Extraction is the point of the whole exercise. An order is built to draw a durable revenue from the people it holds, and the framework's question for this module is simply: what was taken, from whom, and by what mechanism? Run it at most colonies and the answer is a substance — the sugar of Saint-Domingue, the cotton of the American South, the silver of Peru, the rubber of the Congo — a thing grown or dug by the conquered and carried to the metropole at a profit that makes the conquest worth its cost.

Run it at Eritrea and the answer is nothing. There was no crop that paid, no mine that paid, no trade that paid. The colony that had been sold to the Italian Chamber as a future source of commerce and the economic development of Italy produced, across the whole of its existence, essentially nothing the metropole wanted and could not more cheaply get elsewhere, and it ran at a loss every year, a loss the Italian treasury covered out of its own revenues. This is the rarest configuration in the extraction module of the whole collection: a colony from which the net flow of wealth ran *the wrong way* — from the metropole to the colony — for fifty years.

And that emptiness is not a gap in the study. It is the study. Because a colony that cannot be extracted from in the ordinary way, but is held anyway, must be extracting *something*, or it would have been abandoned — and this one was very nearly abandoned, more than once. What it extracted instead is the subject of this module, and it was not a substance. It was the population itself.

The ledger that ran red

Take the ordinary extraction first, and dispose of it, because its smallness is the whole point.

What did Eritrea export? The list, from the period commercial accounts, is almost comically slight for something called a colony: mother-of-pearl fished from the Red Sea, hides and skins, a little ivory, and civet — the musk of the civet cat, used in perfume. That is the export economy of Italian Eritrea in its first decades: shells, skins, and scent. Later, under the enormous Fascist spending of the 1930s, cereal production rose enough to make the colony roughly self-sufficient in grain, and some cotton and coffee were grown for export — but even then the coffee of the whole of Italian East Africa was dwarfed by what independent Ethiopia next door produced and sold, and the manufacturing that arose was mostly in a start-up phase geared to the invasion of Ethiopia rather than to any return on the colony. The one genuine commercial success was salt. A colony whose proudest extractive achievement was salt is a colony with nothing to extract.

What did it import? Overwhelmingly, the things the army needed. Trade through Eritrea, in the plain finding of the economic historians, remained confined largely to imports that supplied the garrison — the grain milled for the troops, the building materials, the stores of an occupation. The commerce the colony generated was not the colony paying Italy; it was Italy provisioning its own soldiers. Even the two Italian firms that profited notably from the colony did so not by extracting its wealth but by carrying Italy's troops to it and laying the telegraph cable that connected it: the shipping line that was paid to move the expeditions of 1887 and 1895, and the cable company. The money that changed hands in Italian Eritrea was, to a remarkable degree, Italian money paying Italians to sustain the occupation of a place that produced nothing to justify the occupation.

And the ledger proves it. The colony's own accounts, kept at the Foreign Ministry and reconstructed by the economic historians, show ordinary colonial revenue falling short of

expenditure year after year, with the gap made up by an extraordinary transfer from the Italian state. In the years around the First World War the colony raised on the order of ten to thirty million lire a year of its own and required transfers from Rome of a similar or greater magnitude to balance — the deficit running to millions of lire annually, and in the year of the imperial build-up before 1936 the transfer from the state ballooned to over three hundred and fifty million lire against colonial revenue of thirty-five million. For its entire life the colony was, in the historians' flat phrase, heavily dependent on the Italian state: it spent more than it took in, and Italy paid the difference. The revealed-preference test the framework relies on — that an apex pays only for what it values — here delivers a strange verdict, because Italy paid, and paid, and paid, for a thing that returned it no revenue at all. Whatever Italy was buying in Eritrea, it was not a profit.

The metropole knew this perfectly well and said so. In the liberal decades, with the deficit an annual embarrassment, Italian politicians concerned about the cost openly discussed leasing the colony to King Leopold of Belgium, or abandoning the Red Sea position entirely. A possession that its owner proposes to rent out to another empire, or simply to quit, is a possession that is not paying for itself, and everyone in Rome could read the accounts. Eritrea was kept not because it paid but despite its not paying — which returns the module to its real question, because a thing kept at a loss for fifty years is a thing being valued for something that does not show up in its trade figures.

The census that was never taken

Before naming what was extracted, one detail from the ledger deserves to be lifted out, because it tells you exactly how little the ordinary extraction mattered, in the coloniser's own voice.

A state that extracts from a population needs to know the population — to count the households, enumerate the livestock, register the land, so that it can tax what is there. The counting is the first act of ordinary extraction; you cannot assess what you have not enumerated. And in Eritrea, the governor who ran the colony for a decade told the Italian parliament that he had deliberately not conducted a proper census of the native population, and justified it on grounds of cost and of Muslim objection — the Qur'an, he explained, holds that one must not number oneself, and so the attempts made in Eritrea had produced only an extremely unreliable count of people and cattle.

Set aside whether the religious explanation was sincere or a convenience. The revealing thing is the priority it discloses. A colony seriously bent on extracting from its subjects does the census anyway, over every objection, because the revenue depends on it — the French and British counted their millions precisely so they could tax them. Italy declined to count, and could afford to decline, because it was not planning to extract from the Eritrean in the ordinary way at all. The native was not, in the colonial accounts, a taxable asset worth the cost of enumerating. He was rendered, in the historians' phrase, invisible — not counted, because what he grew and owned was not the point. The uncounted native is the negative image of the whole extraction story: the colony did not bother to measure what he had, because what it wanted from him was not what he had. It was him.

The only crop that paid

So to the finding the whole study has been walking toward. Eritrea did have one export that the metropole genuinely valued, that it could not get more cheaply elsewhere, and that it drew out of the colony year after year for half a century. The export was soldiers.

The colony that could not grow a crop worth shipping grew *ascari*, and shipped them. The Eritrean soldier was the single most valuable thing the colony produced, and unlike the mother-of-pearl he was not a trinket — he was a first-rate military asset that Italy used to fight its other, larger wars. Eritrean battalions were carried across the sea to fight in Italy's conquest of Libya from 1911; they garrisoned and fought in Somalia; and in the great effort of 1935 and 1936 they formed the backbone of the army that finally conquered Ethiopia, the very war the colony had been founded to prosecute and had lost at Adwa forty years before. At the height of that mobilisation something on the order of forty per cent of the colony's adult men were under arms. The colony was, in the exact words one historian used of it, less a source of goods than a reservoir of soldiers — a recruiting pool, drawn down whenever Italy needed men to fight somewhere else.

Name the mechanism precisely, because it is a genuine form of extraction and not a metaphor. In the ordinary colony, the conquered grow a substance and the metropole draws off the surplus; the thing extracted is the product of the subject's labour. In Eritrea the thing extracted was the subject's *body* — his capacity for organised violence, rented by the colony, paid for in a wage, and expended on battlefields hundreds or thousands of miles from his village, in wars that had nothing to do with him. The wage was the price of the extraction, exactly as a crop price is the return on a harvest; but where a crop leaves the

land and the farmer stays, here the man himself left, and a proportion of the men who left did not come back. Some two thousand Eritreans died at Adwa fighting for Italy; thousands more died in Libya, in Somalia, in the second Ethiopian war. The export was paid for partly in Italian lire and partly in Eritrean lives, and the second currency does not appear in any ledger at the Foreign Ministry.

This is why the earlier modules of this study kept converging on the barracks. The land settlement failed, and the men who could not get their fields went to the recruiting sergeant; the school was capped so that the Eritrean could be made a soldier but not a citizen; the compliance of the highland was bought with a military wage; and all of it points here, to the single fact that organises the colony's whole economy. **The extraction of Italian Eritrea was the extraction of its men.** The colony did not send Italy sugar or silver. It sent Italy soldiers, and Italy spent them conquering other places.

Extraction that runs on a subsidy

There is a paradox in this that the framework has to absorb, and it is worth stating sharply because it looks, at first, like a contradiction.

An extraction colony, by definition, returns a profit — that is what distinguishes it from a mere strategic outpost or a vanity. Eritrea returned no profit; it ran on a subsidy from Rome for fifty years. So in what sense was it an extraction colony at all?

The resolution is that the thing extracted was not sold on the open market for money; it was *consumed by the metropole's own war machine*, and its value therefore appears not in the colony's trade figures but in the wars it made possible. Italy did not get rich off Eritrea. Italy got an army off Eritrea — an army of men who were braver in Italian estimation and, above all, cheaper than Italian conscripts, and who could be sent to die in colonial wars that Italian public opinion would not so readily have spent Italian sons on. The subsidy from Rome was not evidence that no extraction occurred; it was the *cost of production* of the thing extracted. Italy paid to run the colony, and what it bought with that spending was a standing reservoir of colonial soldiers, drawn down as needed. A farm that runs at a book loss but supplies its owner's table is not failing to produce; it is producing something its owner consumes rather than sells. Eritrea was that farm, and what it put on Italy's table was men under arms.

Seen this way the fifty-year deficit is not a mark of a failed extraction but the signature of a particular *kind* of extraction — one where the metropole is not a customer buying a colonial product but a sovereign consuming a colonial resource directly, and paying the running costs because the resource is worth more to it than money. The mother-of-pearl was sold and showed up as revenue; the soldiers were used and showed up as victories, and as the graves at Adwa and Amba Alagi and the Libyan wire. Only one of those two exports mattered, and it was the one that never appeared in the accounts.

Reading extraction against the framework

Three findings, and the third is the revision.

One: a colony can be held at a permanent loss, and the loss is not a failure but a cost of production. The framework's revealed-preference test says an apex pays only for what it values, and Eritrea seems to break it — Italy paid for fifty years and got no revenue. The break is only apparent. Italy was not buying revenue; it was buying a military resource it consumed directly, and the subsidy was the price of maintaining the reservoir. The Field Manual should therefore distinguish two kinds of colony that the trade ledger alone cannot tell apart: the *extractive* colony, which returns a profit in goods or money, and what might be called the *resource-reservoir* colony, which returns no profit but supplies the metropole with something — soldiers, a naval station, a strategic depth — that the metropole consumes rather than sells, and pays to keep. A colony running at a loss is not thereby an unextracted colony; it may be a colony whose extracted product is invisible to the ledger because the metropole is its only consumer.

Two: the tell of a resource-reservoir colony is that the metropole declines to enumerate what the natives own. Ordinary extraction begins with a census, because you must count what you mean to tax. Italy declined to count the Eritrean, and could afford to, because it did not mean to tax what he grew — it meant to recruit what he was. The uncounted native is diagnostic: where a colonial state does not bother to measure its subjects' land and livestock, it is telling you that their product is not what it is there for. Look at what a colony *counts*, and you will see what it means to take; Italy counted its soldiers and not its taxpayers, because its soldiers were its harvest.

Three — the revision: the ultimate object of extraction can be the population itself, and this is the terminal form of the co-optation the whole study has traced.

The earlier finding of this study was that where a conqueror can afford neither to install his belief nor to garrison the ground himself, he rents a slice of the conquered to be his floor. This module completes that thought and darkens it. The rented slice is not only the colony's *means* of holding itself down; it is the colony's *product* — the one thing it makes that the metropole wants. The men are recruited to hold Eritrea, and then the same men are exported to conquer Libya and Somalia and Ethiopia, so that the instrument of internal control and the primary export are the *same population*, drawn from the same villages, paid from the same military budget. The colony's floor and the colony's harvest are one. And that fuses the two halves of the framework — the holding and the taking — into a single mechanism found nowhere else in the collection with this clarity: a colony whose only crop is the very men who garrison it, grown for export to the wars that justify the garrison. The Eritrean was recruited to keep Eritrea, and spent to take everywhere else. He was the floor and the crop at once, and when he died in Libya he was, in the coldest possible sense, the colony's export leaving port.

The colony produced shells, hides, and scent, and lost money on all of it for fifty years. It produced one thing that Italy truly wanted, and Italy spent that thing on three wars. The only crop that paid was the men, and they were paid for in lire and in graves, and the graves are in Tripolitania and on the road to Addis Ababa, a long way from the villages of the plateau, in the ground of the wars that the first-born colony was kept alive to fight.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this module. Governor Martini's parliamentary explanation for not conducting a native census — the appeal to cost and to the Qur'anic objection to self-numbering, and the resulting "extremely unreliable" count — is paraphrased from his statement to the Chamber as reproduced in the modern accounting-history literature (Antonelli, Bigoni, D'Alessio and Funnell, on colonial accounting in liberal and Fascist Italy); the passage should be verified against the parliamentary record (Camera dei Deputati, 1915) before the wording is relied on further, and is given here in paraphrase for that reason. Martini's remark that he identified himself with the colony to the point of saying "I am the colony" is reported in the biographical literature and is likewise given as reported, not quoted.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. The budget and trade data — the colony's ordinary revenue against the extraordinary transfers from the Italian

state, the deficit running to millions of lire annually and to over 350 million in the imperial build-up, and the export list of mother-of-pearl, hides, ivory and civet with imports largely supplying the army — are drawn from Morten Jerven, Donatella Strangio and Jacob Weisdorf's review of Italy's colonisation of Eritrea, which compiles the figures from the Historical Archive of the Chamber of Deputies and from Tekeste Negash's trade series; the figures are given here as orders of magnitude. For the colony as a reservoir of soldiers rather than a source of goods, the export of *ascari* to Libya, Somalia and the 1935–36 Ethiopian war, and the roughly forty per cent mobilisation of adult men at its height: Tekeste Negash, *Italian Colonialism in Eritrea*; Uoldelul Chelati Dirar on the military factor in Eritrean colonial society; and Alessandro Volterra, *Sudditi coloniali*. For the profits of the shipping and cable firms from the military expeditions, the failure of the mining ventures, and the salt industry as the one commercial success: Gian Luca Podestà. For liberal politicians' discussion of leasing Eritrea to King Leopold or abandoning the Red Sea: the business-history literature on Fascist Italy's East African empire (drawing on the same liberal-era debates).

Contested figures, given as ranges. Colonial revenue and state transfers are given as orders of magnitude from the reconstructed accounts and vary year to year; the figure of over 350 million lire in transfers is for the single exceptional year of the imperial build-up (1934) against about 35 million of colonial revenue, and should not be read as typical. The roughly forty per cent mobilisation figure is Negash's, for the peak of the 1935–36 recruitment, against far lower proportions (on the order of seven per cent) in the 1910s and 1920s. Eritrean military deaths are given as ranges: about two thousand at Adwa, and thousands more across the Libyan, Somali and second Ethiopian campaigns, on figures that are incomplete and contested and are stated here only to establish that the human cost of the export was large. The coffee comparison with independent Ethiopia (Ethiopian production of at least 350,000 quintals, over 200,000 exported) is Podestà's, used only to show the relative triviality of Italian East African output.

MODULE 7

ONE VERB, TWO EMPIRES

Where the seam of this order became visible in a single word — a treaty written in two languages that were declared to agree perfectly and did not, one permissive verb in Amharic and one obligatory verb in Italian, a protectorate smuggled inside a treaty of friendship; and the finding that the colony's information problem was never with its own public, who were told everything and did nothing, but ran in two other directions entirely — outward at the powers of Europe, whom the fiction had to deceive, and inward at a native order that could read the fiction perfectly and went to war over it.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

Where to look for the suppression, and where it isn't

The framework's question for this module is: how did the order control what could be known and said about it, and which way did that control face? And the first thing to establish about Italian Eritrea is the same thing that has held across the whole run of European colonial cases in this collection — that toward the metropole, toward the Italian public whose belief funded and manned the thing, there was almost no suppression at all, because almost none was needed.

The record bears this out with a flatness that is itself the finding. The catastrophe of the founding decade was debated openly in the Italian Chamber; the deficit was an annual public embarrassment; the enterprise was attacked in the press by radicals, socialists and republicans from the start, who called it a barbarising of Italian politics, and their attacks were printed. The Royal Commission of Inquiry of 1891 into the abuses in the colony was a parliamentary event, its findings published. Even the most damaging administrative fact of the whole period — that two Italian generals had ordered men killed in secret — was stated to a parliamentary commission, recorded, and survived into the printed histories. The Italian public was not, in any serious sense, lied to about Eritrea. It was told, and it did not much care, and an order whose public does not care has no need to buy a censor to face it. Suppression is expensive; inattention is free; and no administration purchases the first where the second is doing the work. The empty metropolitan

censorship record is not an absence of evidence. It is the measurement of how little the Italian public would have punished, which was very little.

So the suppression of this colony, where it existed and where it was real, faced the other way — two other ways. It faced *outward*, at the international system, because the thing Italy was actually doing in the Horn had to be hidden not from Italians but from the other European powers and from Ethiopia's own ruler. And it faced *inward*, at the conquered, in the ordinary colonial manner. This module is about the outward direction first, because in this case the outward seam produced the single most legible fiction in the whole study, and then a war.

The verb

On 2 May 1889, at the camp of Wuchale in the Ethiopian highlands, Count Pietro Antonelli signed for Italy and Menelik, King of Shewa and now claiming the imperial throne, signed for Ethiopia a treaty of friendship and commerce. It ran to twenty articles. Article 3 ceded to Italy the highland provinces that would become the core of Eritrea — the first time, as Antonelli boasted in a letter to Crispi, that a king of Ethiopia had ceded part of his territory by written accord. Article 6 gave Menelik the right to import arms through Massawa. And Article 17 — one sentence — is the seam of this entire order made visible in a single verb.

The two texts were written in parallel, the Italian drafted by Antonelli's side, the Amharic by Ethiopian scribes, and Article 19 declared that the two versions agreed with each other perfectly and that both were equally official. They did not agree. In the Italian text, Article 17 read that His Majesty the King of Kings of Ethiopia *consents to avail himself of* the Government of Italy for all dealings with other powers — *acconsente di servirsi*, a binding obligation, the King *must* conduct his foreign relations through Rome. In the Amharic text, the operative verb was permissive: the King of Kings *may* avail himself of the Government of Italy — *yichalachewal*, he can, if he wishes, he is able to. One clause, two verbs. The Italian made Ethiopia a protectorate of Italy, its foreign policy surrendered to Rome. The Amharic left Ethiopia a sovereign state that might, at its option, route a message through the Italians if it found that convenient.

That is the whole fiction of Italian Eritrea in one word, and it is worth pausing on exactly what kind of fiction it is, because it is not the ordinary colonial robe. The robe of this

colony, examined earlier, was cut for the Italian public — the promise of fellow-citizens, the civilising mission, the first-born colony. Article 17 was cut for nobody in Italy. It was cut for the *chanceries of Europe*. Under the rules the European powers had made among themselves for the partition of Africa, a protectorate had to be notified to the other powers to be recognised, and Italy promptly notified them: on the strength of the Italian text of Article 17, Rome informed the signatories of the Berlin Act that Ethiopia was now an Italian protectorate, and Britain and Germany duly began routing their Ethiopian correspondence through Rome. The fiction's target was the international system. Italy was using a mistranslated verb to convert, on paper and in the eyes of Europe, an independent empire into an Italian dependency — to acquire by a treaty of friendship what it had not acquired by conquest.

Whether the divergence was a deliberate fraud by Antonelli or an accident of translation that Italy then exploited is contested and probably unrecoverable, and the honest position is to hold both possibilities open. What is not contested is what the two texts say and what Italy did with the difference. Italy had the more convenient text notified to Europe as the truth, and governed its diplomacy by it, while the sovereign who had signed the other text believed he had signed no such thing. The seam — the gap between what the order claimed and what was actually agreed — did not run here between a metropole and a colony. It ran along a single verb in a bilingual document, and it was held open by the plain fact that the two audiences who had signed it could not read each other's copy.

The seam that closed

The distinctive thing about Article 17, and the reason it belongs at the centre of this study rather than the ordinary colonial seam, is that it *closed* — the two ends were brought into view at the same moment by the one party with both the literacy and the standing to do it, and when they met, the fiction did not survive.

Menelik could read what he had signed. When the discrepancy became clear — and the sources have him protesting to the Italian envoy Salimbeni that he had never so much as dreamt of Ethiopia being an Italian protectorate — he did not merely repudiate the treaty privately. He did the one thing that destroys an outward-facing fiction: he took it over the head of the party maintaining it, directly to the audience the fiction was meant to deceive. In a circular letter of February 1893 to the sovereigns of Europe, Menelik declared the treaty null and informed the powers, in his own voice as an independent monarch, that

Ethiopia had conceded no protectorate and would conduct its own relations. The letter is the exact inverse of the mechanism that holds most colonial seams open. Most colonial fictions survive because the conquered cannot reach the metropolitan audience — they lack the language, the literacy, the standing, the post. Menelik had all four. He wrote to the courts of Europe as their equal, in terms they could not ignore, and the protectorate fiction collapsed at the point where its target learned it was a fiction from the mouth of the man it was practised on.

This is the seam behaving as almost no colonial seam in the collection behaves, and it does so for a reason this whole study has been tracking: Ethiopia was not a conquered people but an intact rival state with a sovereign who could answer in the register of sovereigns. The information asymmetry that a colony normally runs on — the ruler sees everything, the ruled cannot make themselves heard — simply did not obtain between Rome and Addis Ababa, because Addis Ababa had its own chancery, its own arms, and a king who could and did write to kings. When the conquered can reach the audience the fiction is aimed at, the fiction has no cover, and the only thing left to decide the matter is the one thing a fiction exists to avoid: force.

Italy would not withdraw the claim, because to withdraw it before the same European audience was to be humiliated before the powers it had wanted to impress. Menelik would not accept it, because he had never agreed to it. The seam had closed, the fiction was dead, and what a fiction is for is to make force unnecessary — so when it failed, force was all that remained. The road from Article 17 ran to the field, and on 1 March 1896 the Ethiopian army destroyed the Italian army at Adwa. Twenty thousand and more Italian and Eritrean troops were killed, wounded, or captured in a single day; it was the heaviest defeat any European power suffered at African hands in the entire partition of the continent. In October the Treaty of Addis Ababa annulled Wuchale, and Italy recognised, in writing and before the same Europe it had told otherwise, the full sovereign independence of Ethiopia. The one verb had been settled at the price of an army.

Name the mechanism plainly, because it is the module's first finding. A colonial fiction aimed *outward* — at other states rather than at one's own public — is uniquely fragile, because its target is a peer with its own means of verification and its own voice, and it collapses the instant that peer chooses to speak. The robe aimed at one's own credulous public can be maintained for decades because that public will not check; a fiction aimed at a sovereign rival cannot, because the rival will.

The inward seam: the language wall and the uncounted native

Turn now to the other direction the suppression faced, the ordinary colonial one, inward at the conquered — and here Italian Eritrea behaves exactly like its sister colonies, holding the near end of the seam not by a censor but by two cheaper instruments.

The first was untranslation. The colony ran on a permanent gap of language between the Italian administration and the governed, and the gap was not an inconvenience the colony laboured to close but a condition it was content to leave standing. The Eritrean was schooled, when he was schooled at all, only to the fourth grade and only far enough to serve — enough Italian to take an order, not enough to argue in it, and a history curriculum that taught him the names of great Italians and nothing of his own past. A population formed only to the level of usefulness cannot constitute itself as a public in the ruler's language; it cannot lay a common grievance before the metropole in terms the metropole is obliged to read, because it has been denied the terms. The seam at the near end held not because anyone was gagged but because the ruled had been kept, by design, below the threshold of articulate public complaint in the only language that would have carried. This is the cheapest suppression there is: it forbids nothing, breaks no principle, and leaves the record able to say truthfully that no one was silenced.

The second instrument was simply not to look. A state that means to know its subjects counts them — enumerates the households, registers the land, tallies the livestock — and the count is the beginning of both taxation and control. Italy declined to conduct a proper census of the Eritrean population, and the governor who declined it told the Italian parliament that the attempts made had produced only an extremely unreliable count, excusing the failure on grounds of cost and of Muslim objection to self-numbering. Whatever the truth of the excuse, the effect was that the native remained, in the colonial record, largely unenumerated — present as a mass, absent as individuals, his holdings unmeasured and his numbers a guess. An unknown population is a population that cannot easily assemble its own grievances into a record, because there is no register in which it exists as a set of persons with claims. The uncounted native is not only, as an earlier part of this study found, the sign of a colony that meant to extract soldiers rather than taxes. He is also a fact about information: a subject the state has chosen not to know is a subject who leaves no documentary trace to be aggregated into a case against the state.

Between the language wall and the uncounted native, the inward seam of Italian Eritrea held the way the inward seams of the other colonies held — cheaply, by leaving the

conquered below the level at which they could become a public, rather than by any expensive apparatus of censorship. The colony did not need to suppress the Eritrean's voice. It had arranged that the voice would not, in the metropole's language and the metropole's records, fully exist.

The one audience that could read, and what it cost

Set the two directions of the seam side by side and the structure of the whole module appears, and it is the study's contribution.

The outward fiction — Article 17 — was aimed at an audience that *could* read it: the sovereign of Ethiopia and the chanceries of Europe, literate, equipped, and able to verify. It therefore lasted only until that audience chose to check, and its collapse cost Italy an army. The inward suppression — the language wall, the uncounted native — was aimed at an audience the colony had arranged *could not* read it in the terms that mattered: a conquered peasantry kept below the threshold of articulate public complaint. It therefore held indefinitely, cheaply, and cost the colony almost nothing.

The difference between the two is the whole lesson. A fiction's durability is set by the literacy and standing of its target. Aim it at a peer who can answer in your own register, and it is the most fragile thing you own; aim it at a subject you have kept unlettered and uncounted, and it will hold for fifty years. And the metropolitan public sits, revealingly, in a third position — able to read the fiction perfectly, since everything was published in its own language and debated in its own parliament, but choosing not to act on what it read. Toward that third audience the colony needed neither a fiction nor a censor, only the public's own indifference, which was reliably supplied.

So the colony faced three audiences and managed each differently. It deceived the peer it could not silence, and paid for the deception at Adwa when the peer spoke. It silenced the subject it could not deceive, cheaply and permanently, by keeping him below the threshold of speech. And it neither deceived nor silenced its own public, because its own public, though it could see everything, would do nothing — the emptiest and most useful audience of the three.

Reading information and suppression against the framework

Three findings, and the third is the revision.

One: toward the metropole, this colony confirms the pattern of the whole colonial run — the seam is held by inattention, not suppression. The Italian public was told about the deficit, the abuses, the secret killings, the whole embarrassment, and did not act, and so no censor was ever needed to face it. The thinness of the metropolitan censorship record is not an absence of evidence but a measurement of how little the public would have punished. To find where an order's real accountability lay, the instruction holds here as elsewhere: do not ask what it did, ask what it bothered to hide, and from whom. Italy bothered to hide almost nothing from Italians, because Italians would not act on it.

Two: the colony's censorship, where it was real, faced two ways that were not the metropole — outward at rival states and inward at the conquered — and these obey opposite laws. The inward suppression obeyed the ordinary colonial rule: hold the near end of the seam cheaply by keeping the conquered below the threshold of public speech, through untranslation and non-enumeration, so that no censor is required and the record can claim no one was silenced. This case adds the outward direction, which the domestic-facing model does not cover.

Three — the revision: an outward-facing fiction, aimed at a peer state rather than at a domestic public, is governed by the reverse of the rule that governs the robe, and is the most fragile fiction an order can hold. The framework has taught that a fiction aimed at one's own public is durable in proportion to the public's inattention — that publication is safe because no one checks. Article 17 establishes the mirror principle. A fiction aimed at a rival sovereign and the international system is durable only in proportion to the target's *inability to verify and answer* — and where the target is a literate peer with its own chancery and its own voice, that durability is nil. The protectorate fiction survived exactly until Menelik wrote to the courts of Europe in his own hand, and then it collapsed and left only force to settle what it had existed to settle without force. So the Field Manual should distinguish two kinds of seam by the direction they face: the *inward or domestic* seam, held open by the audience's inattention or the subject's enforced silence, cheap and durable; and the *outward or inter-state* seam, held open only by the peer's ignorance, and therefore ruinously fragile, because the peer can read, and check, and speak, and — if it is Ethiopia in 1896 — fight. The deepest information asymmetry a colony runs on is the one it cannot manufacture against a rival state, because a rival state is not a population to be kept unlettered but an equal to be

either deceived briefly or defeated in the field. Italy tried the first, failed, and was handed the second.

One verb carried two empires' claims, and the two claims could not both be true. The colony's own public could read both and shrugged. The conquered peasant was kept from reading either. Only the king across the Mareb could read the verb, and did, and wrote to Europe to say which meaning was the lie — and the answer to a fiction that its target can read and refuse is the thing the fiction was built to avoid, which came, in the end, on a mountainside at Adwa.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. The two readings of Article 17 of the Treaty of Wuchale are the load-bearing primary evidence of this module and are given in substance from multiple independent reproductions of the treaty's Italian and Amharic texts: the Italian *acconsente di servirsi* (consents to / agrees to avail himself of), an obligatory construction, against the Amharic permissive verb rendered *yichalachewal* (he may, is able to, if he wishes). The single Amharic verb is quoted in transliteration only and not in the Ge'ez script, which has not been verified here character by character; the permissive-versus-obligatory contrast, and Article 19's declaration that the two texts agreed perfectly and were equally official, are attested consistently across the reference literature and the reproductions of the treaty and are given on that basis. Menelik's protest to Salimbeni that he had never dreamt of Ethiopia being an Italian protectorate, and his circular letter of February 1893 to the powers of Europe declaring the treaty null, are reported from the biographical and historical literature (including Menelik's biographer Afework Gabre Yesus as transmitted in that literature) and are given as reported rather than quoted from a verified original. Antonelli's boast to Crispi that it was the first time an Ethiopian king had ceded territory by accord is likewise given as reported. The full, verified Ge'ez text and a scholarly interlinear of Article 17 should be consulted before any word of the Amharic is quoted in the original script.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For the drafting of the two texts, the notification of the protectorate to the Berlin Act powers, and Britain's and Germany's initial routing of Ethiopian correspondence through Rome: the standard diplomatic histories of the Wuchale crisis (Chris Prouty, *Empress Taytu and Menelik II*; Harold Marcus, *The Life and Times of Menelik II*), paraphrased. For the metropolitan

openness — the parliamentary debates, the published Commission of 1891, the printed criticism of the colonial enterprise, and the generals' admitted secret killings: the sources used in the earlier modules of this study, principally Beniamino Melli's period narrative and the Italian historical literature. For the governor's refusal to census the native population and its justification: the accounting-history literature on liberal and Fascist colonial administration (Antonelli, Bigoni, D'Alessio and Funnell), as in the extraction module of this study. The reading of the colonial seam as held toward the metropole by inattention rather than suppression, and toward the conquered by untranslation and non-enumeration, is this collection's framework, applied here and tested against the Eritrean case.

Contested figures, given as ranges. Whether the divergence of the two texts of Article 17 was deliberate Italian fraud or genuine mistranslation is disputed in the scholarship and is deliberately left open here. Menelik's army at Adwa is given in the sources at between eighty thousand and a hundred and twenty thousand; Italian and Eritrean casualties are conventionally given as over twenty thousand killed, wounded, and captured across the engagement, with the Italian dead alone usually put in the range of four to six thousand and several thousand more taken prisoner, on figures that vary between accounts. Adwa itself is treated here only as the terminus of the information failure this module traces; the battle's military course is outside the module's scope. The date of Menelik's repudiation circular is given as February 1893 (27 February in some accounts).

MODULE 8

SIXTY-SIX OFFICERS

How the arrangement of rule held itself together — a hierarchy from Rome down to the last bought chief in which each man defended the whole by defending his own slot, and in which every slot an Eritrean could hold was capped low enough that no intermediary could ever accumulate the standing to break it; set against the rival arrangement across the Mareb, where a sacred throne had so bound its own quarrelsome princes to their positions that it could bring men who hated each other to stand together in a single line — and the finding that a colony's stability is the stability of its intermediaries' ledgers, and its fracture comes from the one man of standing whose ledger it lets go empty.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

What the default actually is

The most durable orders in history are not the ones held together by a watchful centre punishing defection. They are the ones arranged so that no one at any level of the structure *wants* to defect, because each person's own position, his own income and standing and security, depends on the arrangement continuing exactly as it is. In such an order the men who run it need not love it, and need not love each other; each defends his own slot out of plain self-interest, and because the slots interlock — because each man's slot is worth having only while the whole structure stands — the entire arrangement is defended by every one of them at once, without anyone being told to defend it. It holds by default. The centre spends nothing on holding the middle in line, because the middle holds itself in line, each man guarding his own place and thereby the whole.

This is a fact about the people *with standing and means* inside a hierarchy — not the common man below it, whose compliance the earlier parts of this study accounted for separately, but the officers, the administrators, the chiefs, the notables, the men who actually operate the machinery of rule. The question this module asks is the coordination question: how were those men arranged, so that a governor at Massawa with a few thousand troops and a scatter of Residents could hold eighty-five thousand square

kilometres for fifty years? And the answer is that they were arranged so that each of them, defending his own position, defended the colony — and, crucially, so that no one of them was ever given a position large enough that he could defend it *against* the colony instead.

The fracture point is the exact inverse of the holding mechanism, and it is where this module's sharpest attention goes. An arrangement held by interlocking self-interest breaks precisely where a man *with standing and means* stops benefiting from it — where his slot is taken, or capped below what his standing warrants, or never granted at all — because at that moment his self-interest, which had been the arrangement's cheapest guarantor, becomes its most dangerous enemy. He has the means to act, and now he has the motive. Every stable hierarchy is therefore a wager that it can keep every player of consequence inside the tent, sharing enough of the take that defending his own share means defending the whole. The colony's stability is the stability of that wager, and its collapse is the wager lost with a single man.

The Italian arrangement: interlock at the top, a ceiling in the middle

Follow the hierarchy of rule downward from Rome and watch how the interlock was built, and where it was deliberately broken.

At the top, the arrangement was ordinary and sound. The King and the government in Rome, the Ministry, the governor appointed directly from Rome and residing in the palace at Asmara, the provincial commissioners — the Residenti — each managing a district, and each Italian officer and official drawing his salary, his rank, his career, and his standing from the continuation of the colony. For the Italians in the structure the default worked as it is supposed to: every man from the governor to the junior Resident had his whole professional life invested in the colony's persistence, and defended it by defending his own place in it. This is the cheap, self-running middle that every durable order wants, and among the Italians the colony had it.

Below the Italian tier sat the intermediaries — the native chiefs, the shaykhs, the *balabat*, the men through whom the district Resident actually governed. Governor Martini, who ran the colony for a decade after Adwa, built his administration explicitly on these men: he governed through the traditional local elites, delegated to them the collection of tax and the settling of disputes and the ordinary running of the villages, and left the existing

native hierarchies substantially in place rather than sweeping them away. This is textbook cheap rule — rent the men the population already obeys, pay them a slice, and let each defend his own restored authority and thereby your colony. And Martini did something telling with it: he kept files. Among his papers is a run of biographies of the native chiefs of the colony — *biografie dei capi indigeni* — dossiers on each intermediary, his standing, his loyalty, his usefulness. A ruler who keeps a biography of every chief is a ruler managing a set of individual ledgers, watching which of his intermediaries is content in his slot and which is not, because he understood exactly what held the structure up and exactly where it would break.

But here is the engineering that distinguishes this colony, and it is the whole point of the module. Italy built the interlock among its intermediaries and then *capped every native slot low enough that no intermediary could ever grow into a threat.* The chiefs were given authority, but — in the plain description of the administration's structure — *limited* authority: enough to run a village, never enough to command a province in their own right. The native hierarchies were preserved but not integrated; a chief remained a chief, useful and salaried and watched, and could rise no further. The ceiling was hard and it was everywhere, and its sharpest expression was in the one part of the structure that carried actual force — the army.

Look at the order of battle of the colonial army as it stood at the Battle of Coatit in January 1895, because the numbers are the ceiling made visible. The Italian force was 3,883 men. Of these, sixty-six were Italian officers and a hundred and five were Italians in the ranks; the remaining three thousand seven hundred and more were *ascari* — Eritreans. An army nine-tenths Eritrean, and every officer of it Italian. That is the arrangement of the colony in a single line of a muster roll. The Eritrean could be a soldier, a non-commissioned officer, a *shumbashi* — he could rise to the top of the native ladder — and there the ladder stopped, at a rung permanently below the lowest Italian officer. The command of organised violence, the one position from which the arrangement could actually be overthrown, was reserved by structure to men whose entire standing came from Rome. Sixty-six officers held an army of nearly four thousand, and they could hold it because the four thousand had been built so that not one of them could ever become the sixty-seventh.

This is a different and colder design than the ordinary default. The classic durable hierarchy keeps its middle loyal by letting each man rise as far as his standing warrants, so

that ambition is satisfied inside the tent. The colonial arrangement could not do that, because to let an Eritrean rise to real command was to admit him as an equal, and the whole caste logic of the colony forbade it. So Italy substituted a second mechanism for the first: instead of satisfying the intermediary's ambition, it *capped* it — gave him a slot worth defending but small, and made sure the slots above it were structurally closed to him. The interlock among the Italians held the colony; the ceiling on the Eritreans made sure the interlock could never be seized. It was cheap, and it worked for fifty years, and it had one flaw, which is that a capped man of standing is a man whose self-interest can turn — and when it turns, he has just enough means to matter.

Bahta Hagos: the ledger let go empty

The flaw revealed itself early, in the person this study has met from two sides already and now meets from the third, which is the one that matters most.

Bahta Hagos was the colony's default working exactly as designed — until it wasn't. He was a man of real standing in Akele Guzai, and Italy had done the right thing by him: given him a slot, and a substantial one for a native, raising him to the Abyssinian rank of *Dejazmach*, arming his followers, paying him, using him to hold the eastern march and to fight the Mahdists. For years his self-interest and the colony's ran together perfectly. He defended Akele Guzai for Italy because defending Akele Guzai for Italy *was* his position, his income, his standing. The default held him as it is supposed to hold a man of consequence: by making the arrangement pay him well enough that guarding his own slot guarded the colony.

Then Italy let his ledger go empty. The land expropriations ran across his province, taking from the men whose loyalty was the basis of his own authority; the demand went out that his followers surrender their rifles, stripping him of the means that made him worth courting. In the terms of the arrangement, Italy was reaching into the slot it had given a man of standing and hollowing it out — taking the land, taking the guns, taking the very things that made his position a position. And a man of standing whose slot is being emptied is precisely the man the default cannot hold, because he retains the means to act and has just been handed the motive. In December 1894 his self-interest, which had defended the colony for years, inverted in an instant. He raised Akele Guzai, cut the telegraph, and declared the province independent — and within days he was dead, killed by the colony he had held up until the week its arrangement stopped holding him up.

Read Bahta Hagos as the module's demonstration and the whole logic is legible. He was not a man who never believed in Italy — belief was never the currency; he had none and needed none. He was a man whose position paid, and who defended the arrangement for exactly as long as it paid, and who broke it the moment a man of standing with means was cut out of the take. The colony survived him easily, because he was a single intermediary and the ceiling above him meant he commanded no more than a province's worth of force. That is the ceiling doing its work: it kept the fracture small by keeping every native slot small. But the mechanism he exposed is the one that governs the whole structure. The colony was stable exactly as long as it kept its intermediaries' ledgers full; it fractured, each time and everywhere, at the slot it let go empty; and the only reason each fracture stayed survivable is that the ceiling had made sure no intermediary's slot was ever big enough for his defection to be fatal.

The rival arrangement: how a throne brought its enemies to one line

Now cross the Mareb, because the Ethiopian order is the same problem solved by the opposite means, and the contrast is the deepest thing in the module.

Ethiopia faced the identical coordination problem Italy faced, in a harder form. Its great regional lords — the *ras* of Tigray, of Gojjam, of Wollo, of the south — were men of enormous standing and independent means, each with his own army, his own province, his own claim, and many of them were rivals who had fought one another for generations. The Ethiopian default, when it failed, produced exactly the condition its whole design existed to prevent: the era the Ethiopians remembered as the time of the princes, when the imperial throne became a plaything and the *ras* made and unmade figurehead emperors and the country dissolved into their competition. Menelik's problem in the 1890s was the coordination problem at its most acute — how to make men of the first rank, who did not like each other and did not have to obey him, stand together.

The arrangement that solved it was the sacred order this study described at its outset — the Solomonic throne, the Church, the descent from Solomon, the whole naturalised structure in which the emperor was not merely the strongest lord but the anointed apex of a divinely-ordered world. That order did for Ethiopia's princes what Italy's ceiling could never do for its chiefs: it gave each *ras* a position inside a structure whose continuation was in his own interest to defend, and it sacralised that structure so deeply

that defending it felt like defending the order of the world itself. A *ras* held his province, his rank, his standing *within* the Solomonic order; to shatter that order was to saw off the branch he sat on. And so the default that had failed in the time of the princes could, under a capable emperor, be made to hold — and its holding is visible in the single most important political fact of the whole Horn in these years.

By June 1894, even the leading men of Tigray — Ras Mengesha and Ras Alula, who had every regional reason to resent the Shewan Menelik and had been Italy's own hoped-for clients — travelled to Addis Ababa to pay homage to the emperor. And in March 1896 the army that destroyed Italy at Adwa was, in the exact description of those who have studied it, an alliance of princes who were often at war with each other: Ras Alula, Ras Mengesha, Ras Makonnen, Ras Mikael, the empress Taytu with her own contingent, each commanding his own men, all of them in one line. Men who had fought each other stood together, because the Solomonic arrangement had made each of their positions depend on the survival of the whole, and had made the whole sacred enough that an Italian protectorate was an assault on it that every one of them had a personal stake in repelling. That is the default working at the highest possible level — an arrangement so well-engineered that it brought a throne's own rivals to defend it against a foreign power, out of the interlocking self-interest of men who would happily have fought each other the year before and did again the year after.

Set the two arrangements side by side and the whole module resolves. Italy held its intermediaries by capping them — giving each a small slot and closing the ladder above so that no man of standing could grow into a threat, a design that kept every fracture small and survivable and that bought fifty years of cheap rule at the price of an order no native ever defended as his own. Ethiopia held its intermediaries by elevating them — giving each *ras* a great position inside a sacred whole whose survival was his own survival, a design that risked everything on the throne's ability to keep the giants aligned but that, when it worked, could field a coordinated army of the first rank. Italy's arrangement could never be seized by its own middle and could never inspire it either; Ethiopia's could be torn apart by its own princes and could also, at the peak of its function, move them as one. Italy built an order safe from its intermediaries. Ethiopia built one made of them. And on the first of March 1896 the order made of its intermediaries destroyed the order that had none to speak of, because sixty-six officers holding a capped native army is a

cheap way to hold a colony and a catastrophic way to fight a nation whose every prince had come to the field.

Reading coordination and the default against the framework

Three findings, and the third is the revision.

One: a colony's stability is the stability of its intermediaries' ledgers, and its fracture is located, every time, at the slot it lets go empty. The default holds the men of standing in the middle of the structure not by their belief and not by the centre's vigilance but by their own interest in the continuation of positions that pay them. The colony is stable exactly as long as each intermediary of consequence finds that defending his own slot defends the arrangement; it fractures at the man of standing whose slot is emptied — whose land is taken, whose means are stripped, whose position is hollowed while he retains the capacity to act. Bahta Hagos is the type case: not a believer who lost his faith but a stakeholder who lost his stake, and turned, as a man with means and a motive will. The diagnostic for a colony's fracture points is therefore not where belief is thinnest but where a man of standing is being cut out of the take while keeping the means to answer for it.

Two: where an order cannot satisfy its intermediaries' ambition, it must cap it, and the cap is a distinct mechanism with a distinct signature — a ceiling that no member of the subject caste may cross. The classic default keeps the middle loyal by letting each man rise as far as his standing warrants, satisfying ambition inside the structure. A colonial order forbids that, because real advancement would mean admitting the subject as an equal, which the caste logic exists to deny. So it substitutes capping for satisfying: it gives the intermediary a slot worth defending but small, and closes every slot above him by structure — sixty-six Italian officers over an army of near four thousand Eritreans, a native ladder that ends one rung below the lowest ruler. This keeps the arrangement unseizable by its own middle and keeps every fracture small, at the cost of an order that its intermediaries defend only for pay and never as their own. The Field Manual should read the height and hardness of that ceiling as a direct measure of how far a colonial order has chosen safety-from-its-middle over loyalty-of-its-middle.

Three — the revision: the same recursion that makes a fragmented native order cheap to rule makes a fused one impossible to conquer, because the fusion that

resists the conqueror is an elite-coordination arrangement that has solved the default at the level of its great men. This study began by finding that Italy came up onto the plateau cheaply because it met not one native order but the shatter zone of several former conquests, none of which had fused its great men into a single defended whole — a fragmentation the colony could rule by renting capped intermediaries one at a time. This module completes that thought at the level of coordination. The reason Ethiopia could not be taken the same way is that Ethiopia was the opposite kind of arrangement: a former conquest that had fused, over a millennium, into a sacred order in which every great man's position depended on the whole, so that the whole could summon all of them at once. The fragmented order is a set of separate ledgers the conqueror can buy or empty one by one; the fused order is a single interlocked ledger in which emptying any one great man's slot means threatening all of theirs, so that an attack on the apex is felt as an attack by every prince on his own account. That is why the fragmented march was cheap and the fused empire was ruinous, stated now in the terms of the default: **a conqueror can rent the intermediaries of an order that never coordinated its great men, and must fight, all at once, the intermediaries of an order that did.** Italy rented the first and met the second in the field, and the muster rolls tell the whole story — sixty-six officers on the one side, and on the other an alliance of princes who hated each other, standing in a single line because a throne a thousand years old had made each of their positions his reason to be there.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this module. The order of battle at Coatit — 3,883 men, of whom 66 were Italian officers, 105 Italians in the ranks, and the remainder *ascari* — is given from the standard military-historical accounts of the battle (13 January 1895) and is used as a representative snapshot of the colonial army's caste structure rather than as a constant; the exact composition varied campaign to campaign. Martini's collection of biographies of the native chiefs (*biografie dei capi indigeni*, in the Martini papers at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato and the Archivio Eritrea) is cited from the scholarly apparatus that references it (Taddia; and the study of colonialism and Eritrean national identity that reproduces the archival citation), not consulted directly.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For Martini's system of indirect rule through traditional elites, the delegation of tax and dispute-settlement to chiefs and shaykhs, and the preservation-without-integration of native hierarchies: Tekeste Negash, *Italian Colonialism in Eritrea*, and the reference literature on Martini's governorship. For the administrative hierarchy — Rome, governor, provincial commissioners (Residenti), native chiefs with limited authority — the standard accounts of the colony's structure. For the *ascari* rank ceiling with all officers Italian: the military-historical literature on the Regio Corpo Truppe Coloniali. For the Ethiopian side — the era of the princes as the recurrent failure of imperial coordination, Menelik's consolidation, the homage of Mengesha and Alula at Addis Ababa by June 1894, and the composition of the Adwa army as an alliance of mutually hostile princes (Alula, Mengesha, Makonnen, Mikael, Taytu): the standard histories of Menelik and of Adwa (Prouty; Marcus; Jonas, *The Battle of Adwa*), paraphrased. The reading of the Solomonic order as a fused elite-coordination arrangement, against the shatter-zone fragmentation of the Eritrean march, is this study's framework applied to the coordination problem.

Contested figures, given as ranges. The Coatit numbers are given as the military literature reports them and vary slightly between accounts; the essential ratio — an army roughly nine-tenths Eritrean under an entirely Italian officer corps — is not in dispute. The Ethiopian army at Adwa is given elsewhere in this study at between eighty thousand and a hundred and twenty thousand; the composition as an alliance of independent princes is well attested and is the load-bearing point here rather than the exact total. Bahta Hagos's revolt (December 1894), rank, and death are treated with their sources in the settlement and cost-column modules of this study.

MODULE 9

THE CATEGORY THEY ERASED

Where the study asks whether the ruled had any liberty that was more than words — any real protection from the apparatus, any lever a subject could pull against it — and finds that the Eritrean had none, because he had no faction of standing to win one, while the one in-between category that had begun to accrete on its own, the children of mixed unions, was deliberately abolished by law before it could harden into a constituency; and the finding that liberties are the residue of factional bargains struck by men with means, so that a caste kept without means gets no residue, and an emergent category with no defenders can simply be legislated out of existence.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

What a liberty is, and where to look for one

A liberty is not a promise. It is a lever. The test of whether a subject possesses one is not whether a charter or a governor's speech says he is protected, but whether he holds, against the apparatus that rules him, some real capacity the apparatus cannot simply cancel: to speak without being silenced, to petition and be heard, to assemble, to keep a thing the state cannot take, to be tried by a rule the ruler did not write for the occasion. A right that exists only as words on paper, with no mechanism behind it and no one positioned to enforce it, is not a liberty; it is decoration. The framework's question for this module is whether the ruled of this colony held any liberty in the real sense, and the answer is the sharpest negative in the study — but the interesting part is *why*, because the reason a subject has or lacks liberties is not about the subject's deserving and not about the ruler's kindness. It is about factions.

Liberties are residue. They are what settles out of fights *inside* the hierarchy, among men who already have standing and means. A faction bargains from a position of strength; the apex, not wishing to destroy the whole arrangement over the quarrel, concedes something; and the concession — a protection, a privilege, a court the faction can appeal

to, an immunity it can invoke — becomes a lever that faction now holds and will defend, because it is theirs. Repeat that across generations and the levers accrete into what a society calls its liberties. The common man never makes them; he inherits them, if at all, when a lever some faction won for itself turns out to protect him too, or when a faction inside the hierarchy finds it useful to let someone from below be let *in*. So the way to locate a real liberty is always the same: find the factional fight that produced it. Where you can trace a protection to a group that won it for itself from strength, it is real, because it has an owner who will fight for it. Where you cannot find that fight, the protection is probably words.

Run that method through Italian Eritrea and the whole module falls out. Ask, for each population, what factions it had inside the hierarchy and what those factions could bargain for — and the map of the colony's liberties is exactly the map of its factions, and the Eritrean is nowhere on it.

The subject with no faction

Begin with the Eritrean, and state his position in the structure plainly, because everything follows from it.

He was a *suddito* — a subject, not a citizen. Under the colonial order there existed, in the flat finding of the reference literature, no representative institutions for Eritreans of any kind: no council he could elect, no assembly he could sit in, no franchise, no chamber, no body through which a grievance became a claim the apparatus was obliged to answer. He could be tried, under the later Fascist ordering of justice, by the civil governor and by a separate law for subjects — a legal track built for him, not a rule he had any hand in making. He had, in short, no slot inside the hierarchy from which to bargain. And this was not an oversight; it was the entire design the earlier parts of this study traced. The school was capped at the fourth grade so that he could serve but not be admitted; the army's ladder ended one rung below the lowest Italian officer so that he could carry a rifle but never command; the land decree barred him from the freehold; and each of these is, seen from this module's angle, the same act — the systematic denial to the Eritrean of any position of standing from which a faction could form and bargain.

That denial is the reason he had no liberties, and the reason is mechanical, not moral. A subject with no standing has no faction; a population with no faction has nothing to

bargain with; and a population with nothing to bargain with wins no concessions, and so no residue of protection accretes to it. The Eritrean could not petition to any effect because there was no lever behind the petition — no faction whose withdrawal of cooperation would cost the apex enough to make a concession worth its while. He was not oppressed by a failure of the colony's liberty-making machinery. He was oppressed by its success: the machinery was working exactly as built, which was to keep him permanently without the standing from which, in every society that has them, liberties are actually won.

Compare the two populations that *did* have factions, and the contrast proves the mechanism. The settlers had standing and means, and they had a whole apparatus that answered to them — full legal rights, the best land reserved to them by law, courts that were theirs, an administration staffed by their own; the colony's liberties were, to a first approximation, settler liberties, the residue of a population that could bargain because it had weight. And behind the settlers, at the metropole, the liberal opposition in the Italian parliament was a faction too — the radicals and socialists and republicans who attacked the colonial enterprise and could, from their position inside the metropolitan hierarchy, force debates, demand inquiries, embarrass ministers. When any check at all fell on the colony's conduct, it came through *them* — through a faction with standing in Rome, not through anything the Eritrean held. The 1891 Commission of Inquiry into the colony's abuses was not won by the Eritreans the abuses were committed against; it was won by a metropolitan faction with the standing to demand it. Even the colony's rare accountability was residue of somebody else's factional strength. The Eritrean's own share of that residue was nil, because his share of the standing that produced it was nil.

The category that was accreting on its own

There is one place, and only one, where something like an in-between began to form in Italian Eritrea without anyone in power intending it — and what the colony did to that emergent category is the darkest and most revealing act in the module, because it is foreclosure caught in the act.

From the first decades of the colony, Italian men — soldiers, officials, settlers, overwhelmingly men, in a settler population that was around three-quarters male — formed conjugal relationships with Eritrean women. The relationship had a name, *madamato*, and the woman a name, *madama*, and the institution was for decades

tolerated and legal, sometimes assimilated to a local highland custom of temporary marriage-for-hire that bound the man to provide for any children. Out of these unions came children — the *meticci*, the mixed-race children — and by the 1920s there were enough of them, and their situation was live enough, that the colonial administration began doing something with real consequences: it began entering them in the civil registers, recording the children of mixed unions even where the Italian father had not acknowledged them. In 1922 the colony counted on the order of a hundred and sixty-five recognised children of mixed unions and a further hundred and forty-one unrecognised. These were small numbers, but they were the seed of a category — a population neither settler nor subject, with a foot in each caste, some of them registered by the state itself, a few acknowledged by Italian fathers and thereby edging toward Italian status. Left alone, that category would have grown, hardened, and in time perhaps become exactly what a liberty needs: a group with a stake, a name, and a reason to press for a place. It was residue beginning to accrete.

The colony did not leave it alone. When the conquest of Ethiopia in 1936 swelled the Italian presence from a few thousand to tens of thousands, overwhelmingly male, the administration saw the *madamato* threatening to produce the *meticcio* category on a scale it would not tolerate — a growing in-between that blurred the caste line the whole arrangement rested on. And it moved, deliberately and fast, to abolish the category before it could set. In 1936 the ordering stripped mixed children of the path to Italian citizenship. On 19 April 1937 the regime enacted Royal Decree-Law no. 880, the first of the Fascist race-protection laws — earlier by months than the anti-Jewish laws — a statute of a single article: the Italian citizen who, in the Kingdom or the colonies, kept a relationship of conjugal character with a subject of Italian East Africa was to be punished with imprisonment of one to five years. And in 1939 a further law tightened the noose with a clause that names the target exactly: the birth of a mixed-race child was made itself an indicium of the crime — the *meticcio* baby was now legal evidence that the offence of a conjugal relationship had occurred. Hundreds were convicted under these laws. The governor of Eritrea forbade Italians and natives to live in the same quarter of a town; a system of urban segregation, an Italian apartheid, was built around the same principle. The one relationship that crossed the caste line was criminalised, and the one category that crossed it was legislated toward extinction.

Read what that sequence is, in the module's terms. Everywhere else in this study the colony held the caste line by keeping the Eritrean without standing — passively, by capping and withholding. Here it did something active and different: it identified an emergent category that was accreting on its own, that had begun to acquire a foothold in the state's own registers, and that threatened over time to become a constituency with a claim — and it destroyed the category by law before the claim could form. This is foreclosure in its purest and most literal sense. A liberty is residue that accretes when a group with a stake persists long enough to bargain; foreclosure is the apex reaching in to abolish the group *before* it can persist, to erase the category so that no stake, no bargaining, and no residue can ever arise from it. The *meticcio* was not denied a liberty. He was denied *existence as a category*, which is the denial upstream of all the others, because a category that does not exist cannot have a faction, and a thing with no faction can win nothing.

The residue of that erasure is still visible, and it is the proof of what was destroyed. Across the colonial decades Italian men fathered something on the order of twenty thousand children by Eritrean women, most never acknowledged; and their descendants — grandchildren and great-grandchildren — are, to this day, petitioning the Italian state for the citizenship the racial laws denied their forebears, unable in many cases even to prove the Italian ancestry that a fuller registration would have recorded. A whole population exists in the gap the 1937 law opened, carrying the mark of a category the colony tried to legislate out of being. That they are still knocking on Rome's door is the measure of what was foreclosed: a category that, allowed to accrete, would have had standing, and instead was made into a crime.

Why the negative is the finding

The temptation in a module like this is to record the absence of liberties as a moral fact — the colony was cruel, the subject was unfree — and stop. But the absence is a *structural* fact with a mechanism, and the mechanism is the study's contribution, so it must be stated as such.

The Eritrean had no liberties because he had no faction, and he had no faction because the entire architecture of the colony existed to deny him the standing from which a faction forms. This is not a separate cruelty added on top of the capped school and the capped rank and the barred freehold; it is what those things *were for*, seen from the angle

of liberty. Every one of them was a denial of the standing that, in any society, is the raw material of a bargaining position — and a population denied every bargaining position wins no concessions and accretes no protections, not because its rulers forgot to be generous but because there was no faction to force generosity's hand. The colony's liberties went to the settlers and its accountability came through the metropolitan opposition because those were the populations that had factions; the Eritrean got neither, because he had been kept, by design, from being a faction at all.

And the *meticci* show the same mechanism at its most active edge. Where a category began to accrete on its own — to acquire the beginnings of standing, a place in the registers, a foot in the citizen caste — the colony did not tolerate the slow accretion; it foreclosed it by statute, because a category allowed to persist becomes a faction, and a faction wins levers, and a lever in the hands of an in-between population is exactly the crack through which the caste line fails. The 1937 law is the colony reading its own liberty-machinery correctly and running it in reverse: instead of letting a group persist until it could bargain, it abolished the group so that it never could. Foreclosure is not the absence of the liberty-making process. It is that process understood and deliberately prevented.

Reading plurality and foreclosure against the framework

Three findings, and the third is the revision.

One: liberties are residue of factional bargains, so a population's liberties are a map of its factions — and a caste kept without standing appears on that map nowhere. The Eritrean held no real lever against the apparatus not because the colony was uniquely cruel but because he had no faction with the standing to win one, and he had no such faction because every institution of the colony — the capped school, the capped rank, the barred freehold, the absent franchise — was built precisely to deny him standing. The absence of his liberties is therefore not a gap to be explained by the rulers' character but a structural consequence of a design whose whole purpose was to keep him from the bargaining positions liberties are won from. The diagnostic follows: to find where a colonial order's real liberties live, do not read its charters; map its factions, and you will find every protection owned by a group that had the standing to bargain for it, and none owned by the caste that was kept from standing.

Two: the check on a colony's conduct, when there is one, comes through whichever faction has standing in the metropole, never through the conquered. The colony's rare moments of accountability — the Commission of Inquiry, the parliamentary embarrassments — were won by the liberal opposition in Rome, a faction with standing inside the metropolitan hierarchy, and not by the Eritreans the conduct was practised on, who had no standing anywhere. This confirms and sharpens the pattern the whole collection has found: the consent-check runs on the metropole's own factions, and the conquered are not among them, so the check registers what a metropolitan faction will press and nothing the conquered would. A subject population's grievances reach the apparatus only when they happen to coincide with the interest of a faction that has standing to press them, and where they do not coincide, they do not reach it at all.

Three — the revision: foreclosure is not merely the absence of plurality but a distinct and active operation — the deliberate abolition of an emergent category before it can accrete into a faction — and the racial law is its instrument. The framework has treated the plurality/foreclosure axis as a question of how much political space an order leaves open. This case shows that foreclosure has an active mode the passive framing misses. It is one thing to keep a subject without standing, which the colony did to the Eritrean throughout by capping and withholding. It is another, and a further, thing to identify a category that is *beginning to accrete standing on its own* — the *meticci*, registered by the state, some edging toward citizenship — and to destroy that category by law before it can persist into a constituency. The 1937 race law is foreclosure in this active sense: not the failure of a liberty to form, but the apex recognising the early formation of a category that would eventually have to be bargained with, and abolishing it upstream of any bargain. So the Field Manual should distinguish two modes of foreclosure: the *passive*, which denies standing and lets no faction form, and the *active*, which detects an emergent category and erases it — criminalises the union, strips the status, makes the very existence of the in-between person evidence of a crime. The tell of active foreclosure is a law that targets not a conduct the order dislikes but a *category the order fears* — and the mixed-race child, made into legal proof of his parents' offence, is that tell in its most naked form: a person legislated out of a category because the category, allowed to live, would one day have had a claim.

The Eritrean had no liberty because he had no faction; his rulers' charters could promise him fellow-citizenship and it changed nothing, because behind the promise there was no

lever and no faction to pull it. And the one category that might, given time, have grown a lever — the children of the two castes' meeting — was made a crime before it could grow, so that the colony would never have to bargain with the people its own men had fathered. Their descendants are bargaining still, at the door of a state that erased the category their claim depends on, which is the last proof of the module's rule: a liberty is a thing a faction wins and keeps, and a category with no faction can be abolished with a single article of law — and was.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. The operative clause of Royal Decree-Law no. 880 of 19 April 1937 is the load-bearing legal text of this module and is given in close translation from multiple independent reproductions of the decree: the Italian citizen who, in the territory of the Kingdom or the Colonies, keeps a relationship of conjugal character with a person subject to Italian East Africa (or a foreigner of analogous traditions) is punished with imprisonment of one to five years. The single Italian phrase *relazione d'indole coniugale* (relationship of conjugal character) and the title *Sanzioni per i rapporti d'indole coniugale fra cittadini e sudditi* are given as reproduced; the decree was converted, with modification, into Law no. 2590 of 30 December 1937. The 1939 law (no. 1004, *Sanzioni penali per la difesa del prestigio di razza di fronte ai nativi dell'Africa italiana*) making a mixed-race birth an indicium of the offence is given from the same legal-historical reproductions. These texts are public domain; the exact articles should nonetheless be collated against the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* (no. 145, 24 June 1937) before any longer passage is quoted verbatim.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For the *madamato* as a tolerated and legal institution before 1937, its assimilation to the highland custom of marriage-for-hire (*dämòz*), and its character as a relationship heavily marked by coercion and the youth of the women involved: the Italian historical literature on colonial gender and race (Novecento.org's synthesis; the reference literature on the *madamato*), paraphrased. For the registration of mixed children in the civil registers from the 1920s and the 1922 figures (about 165 recognised and 141 unrecognised children of mixed unions): the parliamentary and historical documentation reproduced in the modern literature. For the 1936 removal of the path to citizenship for mixed children, and the segregation ordinances (the governor's prohibition on Italians and natives sharing a town

quarter): the legal-historical literature on the colour bar in Italian East Africa. For the absence of any representative institutions for Eritreans and the *suddito* legal status: the reference literature on human rights and legal status in colonial Eritrea, and the comparative study of citizenship and racism in Eritrea and German East Africa (Max Planck Institute, 2021). For the estimate of some twenty thousand children fathered by Italian men across the colonial period and the continuing citizenship petitions of their descendants: contemporary reporting on the descendants' appeal to the Italian president, used only to establish the scale and the persistence of the foreclosed category. The 1891 Commission of Inquiry is treated with its sources in the earlier modules of this study.

Contested figures, given as ranges. The 1922 counts of mixed children (about 165 recognised, 141 unrecognised) are single reported figures and should be read as indicative of a small but registered population, not as a precise total. The estimate of about twenty thousand children fathered by Italian men over six decades is a modern approximation and is given as such; the number never acknowledged is not recoverable. The settler population figures used to establish the male preponderance driving the *meticcio* question — a rise from under five thousand Italians before the Ethiopian war to some seventy to seventy-five thousand after, around three-quarters male — are given as in the earlier modules of this study, as orders of magnitude. The number of convictions under the 1937 law is given in the literature as "hundreds"; no exact figure is asserted here.

MODULE 10

THE FLOOR THAT DID NOT DESERT

How the colony ended — not by the rising of the ruled, who did not rise, but by the shattering of the floor from outside, in a war about Europe and a sea-lane to Suez, in which the Eritrean soldiers fought and died for Italy to the last ridge and deserted only after the army that paid them had already been destroyed; and the finding that a rented floor is the truest test of the law that orders fall from above, because a floor recruited entirely from the conquered still did not break until an outside army broke it, and the men who might have risen instead held the line for the empire until the empire was gone.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

The question, and the law it tests

The framework's account of how orders change is blunt and it cuts against the story the modern world prefers. Structural change does not rise from the ruled. The common man commands no organised force, and a durable order is an armed settlement that can be altered only by those who command organised force — so a rising against an intact floor is crushed, with a regularity approaching a law, and change comes only when the floor of force itself cracks. It cracks in four ways: the elite fractures and arms the people against itself; it exhausts its floor in great-power war and must pay the survivors; it is conquered by a rival elite and remade at bayonet-point; or it overbreeds, seating fewer claimants than it produces, until its surplus turns revolutionary. In every case the ruled are present at the opening — as soldiers, as crowd, as the weight one broken faction swings — but never as its author.

Italian Eritrea is an unusually clean test of that law, and it is clean for a reason peculiar to this study. This was a colony whose floor of force was rented almost entirely from the conquered — an army nine-tenths Eritrean under an Italian officer corps, holding the ground for a wage. If the law that orders fall only from above has a weak point, it should be here, in the one colony where the men who held the floor down were the same people

the floor held down. A rented floor is a floor staffed by the very population with the most reason to rise. So the question this module asks is the sharpest form of the framework's question: did the colony end because that population finally turned its borrowed rifles on the men who had rented them — or did it end, as the law predicts, because something happened to the elite above, with the rented floor doing to the last what a floor does, which is hold?

The answer is unambiguous, and it is the module.

The rising that did not come

Begin with the thing the flattering story would need and the record does not contain: an Eritrean rising that ended Italian rule. There was none. Across fifty years the colony faced no general revolt of its subjects that threatened its existence, and the one serious armed challenge it did face — Bahta Hagos in 1894 — came not from the peasantry rising against the order but from an intermediary of standing whose own slot had been emptied, and it was put down inside a week by the colony's own troops. The highland was quiet, for the reasons the earlier parts of this study set out: the men the colony needed were paid, the men it did not need were watched, and none of them had an exit worth taking. A population held that way does not rise, because rising is the worst move on its ledger — a rising against an intact floor meets organised violence and loses, and the Eritrean floor was intact, disciplined, and, crucially, largely composed of Eritreans.

This is the first and least remarked finding of the module, and it should be stated before the collapse that follows, because the collapse can obscure it. For fifty years the colony demonstrated the law from the holding side: an intact floor is not overthrown from below, and it made no difference at all that the floor was rented from the ruled. One might have expected — the flattering story would predict — that a floor staffed by the conquered would be the colony's fatal weakness, a mass of armed men with every grievance the order produced. It was instead the colony's great strength, because each of those men was running the ledger of Module 5, and for each of them, holding his slot in the *ascari* paid better than any rising available to him. The rented floor did not rise because the rent was good and the alternative was a firing line. The men who might have been the colony's revolution were its army instead.

The floor shattered from outside

The colony ended in the spring of 1941, and it ended by the third crack — the floor conquered from outside — in the purest form the framework describes, because the conquest had almost nothing to do with Eritrea at all.

Italy entered the Second World War on 10 June 1940. The war was about Europe: about Mussolini's wager that a German victory was imminent and that Italy must be at the table when the spoils were divided. Eritrea was drawn into it not for anything it was or had, but because it sat on the Red Sea, athwart the British sea-lane from Suez to India and the East, and because a hostile power at the mouth of that lane was intolerable to Britain the moment the two empires were at war. The British built up two divisions in the Sudan and three in Kenya, and on 18 January 1941 Lieutenant-General William Platt's force crossed from the Sudan into Eritrea through Kassala. The floor of the colony was about to be tested by an outside army for the first time since Adwa — and unlike Adwa, this time the outside army was one of the great powers of the earth, fighting a world war, with armour and air and the Indian Army behind it.

The test came at Keren. The town held the road and the railway to Asmara and to the port of Massawa, and the Italians made their stand there in a natural fortress of mountains, and they held it for the better part of two months — from early February to the twenty-seventh of March 1941 — in one of the hardest-fought battles of the entire East African campaign. This is the fact that matters for the framework, and it must be stated without flinching: the floor of Italian Eritrea, tested at last by a great-power army, *fought*. It did not dissolve, it did not defect, it did not melt into the hills at the first shock. It fought a first-class colonial war against British and Indian divisions for eight weeks and inflicted thousands of casualties on them before it broke. And the men who did most of the fighting and most of the dying were the Eritreans. The casualty figures at Keren, contested as all such figures are, run in the range of three thousand Italian dead against something on the order of nine thousand *ascari* dead — three times as many Eritreans as Italians died holding the Italian colony against its conquerors. The rented floor, at the end, paid the rent in full and then some.

Only when the army was beaten in the field did it come apart, and the sequence is the whole point. In the direct testimony of one of the Italian officers who led Eritrean troops through the campaign, there was very little loss through desertion until the army collapsed after the defeat at Keren — the ascari held, and held, and held, and began to melt away

only *after* the floor above them had already been shattered by the British. Asmara was declared an open city and fell on 1 April 1941; Massawa followed. Some of the ascari, remarkably, did not stop even then: a handful fought on for months in a guerrilla campaign under Italian officers like Amedeo Guillet, a private war to prevent the dissolution of a colony that had, for every practical purpose, already ceased to exist. The floor did not desert the order. The order was destroyed above the floor, and the floor came apart because there was no longer anything above it to hold up.

Name what this is in the framework's terms. It is the third crack, elite conquest from outside, and the study's own account of that crack anticipated exactly this case: the end of many a colonial order, it observed, turns far less on the moral force of the colonised than on the exhaustion or withdrawal of the imperial power after its own ruinous wars. Eritrea is the limiting example. The colonised did not end the colony. A rival great power ended it, in a war about a different continent, by defeating the floor in the field — and the colonised were present at that ending exactly as the law says the common man is always present at these openings: as soldiers. But here, with a bitter twist the framework should absorb, they were present as the soldiers of the *losing* side, dying to hold the colony *up* rather than to bring it down. The weight the conquered threw at Keren, they threw for Italy.

Why the rented floor held to the end

The twist deserves its own reckoning, because it looks, at first, like the deepest possible confirmation of the law — the ruled dying for their rulers — and because understanding why it happened is the module's contribution.

The ascari held for the reason they had always held, which was the ledger. For the individual Eritrean soldier at Keren in 1941, the calculation that had governed him for a career still governed him: his wage, his rank, his pension, his standing, and the esprit of his regiment all flowed from the Italian order, and they flowed right up until the moment that order was physically destroyed. Desertion in the middle of a battle is not a vote against colonialism; it is a bet, and for most of the battle it was a bad bet, because the Italian floor was still intact enough to punish a deserter and still paying enough to reward a man who stayed. The ascari did not fight for Italy because they had been made to believe in Italy — the whole of this study has shown that belief was never grown in them, and Keren did not require it. They fought for Italy because fighting for Italy was, until the

floor broke, still the best move on the same ledger that had made them soldiers in the first place. And the moment the floor broke — the moment Keren fell and the army above them dissolved and there was no longer a paymaster to reward loyalty or an apparatus to punish flight — the ledger flipped, and they melted away, not from conviction but from the same cold arithmetic pointing the other way. The desertion after Keren and the tenacity before it are the same mechanism reading a changed board.

This is the rented floor behaving exactly as a rented floor must, and it closes the argument the study opened. A floor bought with a wage is loyal precisely as long as the wage can be paid and the paymaster can enforce, and not one hour longer. It will fight magnificently while the order stands, because fighting is its slot and its slot pays; and it will evaporate the instant the order falls, because there is then nothing left to pay it and nothing left to punish it. The colony got, at Keren, the full value of the floor it had rented for fifty years — men who died in their thousands holding a foreign empire's ground — and it got, the week after, the full cost of having only rented it, which is that a rented floor cannot outlive its landlord by a single day. An order held by belief can sometimes survive the destruction of its apparatus, carried on by subjects who still think it right; an order held by a wage cannot, because the wage stops when the apparatus does. Italy had chosen, at every juncture this study has traced, to hold Eritrea by the wage rather than the belief — and the wage held right up to the open city of Asmara and then held no more.

What did not change, and what the collapse reveals about the whole

There is a final observation the framework requires, and it is easy to miss in the drama of Keren.

When the floor fell, the settlement it had held in place did not transform into anything the Eritreans made. The colony did not become an independent Eritrean order; it became a British military administration, one imperial floor lifted off and another set down in its place, exactly as the third crack predicts — change at bayonet-point, decided by whose army stood where, with the population the territory that changed hands. The Eritreans who had fought at Keren, on both the dying and the deserting sides of it, did not inherit a state; they inherited a new set of foreign administrators who would govern them for the next decade while the powers decided their fate at conference tables in London and New York. The men whose bodies had been the colony's only real export, and then its last line

of defence, were at the end of it precisely what they had been at the beginning: the ruled, present at every turn of the machinery and the author of none of it.

And this is what the collapse reveals about the fifty years before it. An order that ends by being conquered from outside, its rented floor loyal to the last and its subjects inheriting nothing, is an order that was never, at any point, resting on the consent or the will of the people it governed — because if it had been, that consent or that will would have shown up somewhere in the ending, and it does not. The Eritrean will is absent from the collapse of Italian Eritrea for the same reason it was absent from its founding and its whole duration: the colony was a floor rented from some of the conquered to hold down all of them, funded and directed from a metropole across the sea, and it began, ran, and ended as a transaction between armed elites — Italy and Ethiopia at the founding, Italy and Britain at the end — over a population that was the object of the transaction and never a party to it. The collapse did not break the pattern of the study. It completed it. The last thing the colony proved was the first thing it had assumed: that the Eritrean was the thing being ruled, and the ruling was decided elsewhere.

Reading change and collapse against the framework

Three findings, and the third is the revision.

One: the rented floor is the hardest case for the law that orders fall only from above, and it confirms the law rather than breaking it. One might predict that a floor recruited from the conquered would be a colony's fatal weakness — the revolution already armed and in barracks. Italian Eritrea shows the opposite. The rented floor did not rise for fifty years, because each man in it found holding his slot paid better than any rising available to him; and when the colony finally fell, it fell not because the rented floor turned but because an outside great power destroyed it in the field, with the rented floor fighting and dying to prevent exactly that outcome. A floor staffed entirely by the ruled is not more prone to revolution from below; it is, while the wage holds, precisely as immune to it as any other intact floor, because the men who staff it are running the ledger that keeps them loyal. The framework can therefore state its law in its strongest form: not merely that orders are rarely overthrown from below, but that even an order whose entire coercive apparatus is drawn from the subject population is not overthrown from below — the composition of the floor does not change the law, because the law is about organised force and a wage, not about who the armed men are.

Two: a rented floor cannot outlive its paymaster, and this is the specific vulnerability that replaces the one it does not have. The rented floor trades one risk for another. It does not carry the risk of revolt that the flattering story would assign it, because the wage holds it. But it carries, in exchange, a total dependence on the continuity of the paymaster: it will fight to the last ridge while the order stands and evaporate the instant the order falls, because loyalty bought with a wage ends the moment the wage cannot be paid or enforced. An order held by belief can be carried by its subjects across the destruction of its apparatus; an order held by a rented floor cannot survive that destruction by a day. So the Field Manual should record that the choice to hold a colony by the wage rather than the belief — the choice this whole study has traced Italy making at every juncture — purchases fifty years of cheap, revolt-proof stability at the price of a collapse with no resilience whatever: the rented floor is the most loyal floor in the world right up to the moment its landlord is beaten, and the least persistent floor in the world one moment after.

Three — the revision: the twist that the conquered fought *for* the dying order refines the framework's account of the common man at the opening. The framework holds that the ruled are always present at the crack — as soldier, crowd, or the weight a broken faction swings — but present as the fuel of change, never its author. Eritrea adds a case the framing did not quite contain: the conquered present at the opening as the soldiers of the side *resisting* change, throwing their weight to hold the old order *up*. At Keren the Eritrean dead outnumbered the Italian dead three to one, and they died to keep the colony standing against the army that was ending it. This is not a contradiction of the law but a sharpening of it, and the sharpening is this: the common man at the opening fights for whichever side is paying and commanding him, not for the side his interests as a subject might seem to dictate — because his interests as a *soldier*, which are the interests the wage has made salient, attach him to the floor he stands on regardless of whether that floor rules him. The weight the conquered swing is swung by whoever holds their ledger, and at the fall of a rented-floor colony that is the coloniser, to the very end. So the framework should not say the common man is merely "not the author" of change; it should say he is the instrument of whoever commands the organised force he is part of, which at the collapse of this colony meant that the ruled spent themselves defending their rulers — the purest demonstration in the collection that the floor is about organised force and a wage, and not about the will of the men who make it up.

The colony did not fall because the Eritreans rose. It fell because Britain and Italy, two armed elites, fought a war about a sea-lane, and the British floor beat the Italian floor at Keren — and the Eritreans, who might in the flattering story have seized that moment to throw off fifty years of rule, instead died three-to-one holding the ridge for the empire that ruled them, and deserted only when there was no longer an empire to hold the ridge for. The last export of the colony was the same as the only export it ever had. The men were spent, this final time, defending the machine that spent them, and when the machine was broken above their heads they put down their rifles and went home to wait for the next set of foreigners to arrive. Which, within days, over the road from Keren, did.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this module. The key testimony — that the Eritrean troops suffered very little loss through desertion until the army collapsed after the defeat at Keren — is the recollection of the Italian cavalry officer Amedeo Guillet, given in his biography and interviews (Sebastian O'Kelly, *Amedeo: The True Story of an Italian's War in Abyssinia*), and is paraphrased here from that reported testimony rather than quoted; it should be checked against O'Kelly's text before any wording is relied on. Guillet is an interested witness — an officer testifying to the loyalty of the men he commanded — and the point is corroborated by the general course of the battle rather than resting on his word alone.

Paraphrased modern scholarship and the military record, credited and not quoted. The course of the East African campaign of 1940–41 — the Italian entry into the war on 10 June 1940, the British build-up in Sudan and Kenya, Platt's invasion from Kassala on 18 January 1941, the fall of Agordat and Barentu, the two-month battle of Keren from early February to 27 March 1941, the declaration of Asmara as an open city on 1 April, and the fall of Massawa — is drawn from the standard military histories of the campaign and the battle. The composition of the defending force as a mixed army of Italian regulars and Eritrean colonial battalions, and the subsequent British military administration of Eritrea, are from the same literature and from the reference accounts of the colony's end. Amedeo Guillet's guerrilla campaign after the collapse is drawn from O'Kelly's biography and the reference literature. The reading of the collapse as the framework's third crack — conquest from outside, change at bayonet-point — applies this collection's theory of structural change, which holds that colonial orders end far more

often through the exhaustion or defeat of the imperial power than through the moral force of the colonised.

Contested figures, given as ranges. Casualty figures for the Battle of Keren vary considerably between sources and are given here as ranges: British and Indian dead and wounded on the order of four to five thousand; Italian dead around three thousand; *ascari* dead given in some accounts as high as nine thousand with far larger numbers wounded. The figure of roughly three Eritrean dead for every Italian dead is the load-bearing point and is robust across the accounts even where the absolute numbers differ; it should nonetheless be treated as an order of magnitude, since colonial casualty accounting in this campaign was incomplete. Force strengths (British forces around 13,000 rising with reinforcement; Italian and colonial forces around 23,000 to 31,000 across the battle) are given as the military literature reports them and varied over the course of the fighting.

MODULE 11

THE NOTE NO ONE MEANT TO CALL

The final ledger, kept honestly — the deliberate costs of the conquest and the real things it built, held together without letting either cancel the other; and beside them a third column larger than both, a metabolic debt the conquest called without meaning to, when cattle brought to feed the garrison carried a plague that killed the herds, then the people, then changed the land itself; and the finding that the gravest harm a conquest does is often the one no one decided, and that time launders all three columns alike until the violence that made the arrangement is simply the way the world is.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

Three columns, and the discipline of keeping them apart

The grim accounting is the module where the study stops analysing the machine and totals what it cost — but the totalling has to be done with a particular discipline, because there are three kinds of cost here and they are not the same kind of thing, and collapsing them into a single number of the dead would be a lie in either direction.

The first column is the deliberate harm: the violence the order chose, the killings and expropriations and exclusions that were policy, done by decision, for the arrangement's benefit. The second column is the built thing: the roads and the city and the shape of a country, the real and durable goods the order left behind, which cannot be waved away because the order that built them was unjust. And the third column is the one this study has circled since its opening and must now name directly: the metabolic debt — the catastrophe the conquest set off without deciding to, when it introduced into a population and a herd with no immunity a thing that killed on a scale no policy in the first column approached. This third column is the largest, and it is the one that most resembles what happened in the Americas, where the great dying was overwhelmingly the work of pathogens the conquerors carried rather than swords they swung. To keep these

three apart is the whole task of the module, because the honest reckoning is not a single verdict but a refusal to let any column erase the others.

The first column: what was decided

Set down the deliberate costs plainly, because they have been established across this study and need only be gathered.

The conquest killed by policy from the beginning. The generals who told a parliamentary commission in 1891 that they had ordered men killed in secret; the columns that burned villages and hanged suspected rebels; the client chief shot down when the land was taken from under him. The land itself: over four hundred thousand hectares of highland declared Crown property and surveyed away, much of it while its owners were absent in a famine, so that men returned to find their fields the state's. The formation withheld: a school capped at the fourth grade so the Eritrean could serve but never be admitted, a colony left after fifty years without a single native university graduate. The bodies spent: the men recruited as the colony's one profitable export and expended in Italy's other wars — some two thousand dead at Adwa, thousands more across Libya and Somalia and the second Ethiopian war, nine thousand at Keren holding the colony against its conquerors. And the category erased: the mixed union criminalised, the mixed child made evidence of his parents' crime, a whole population of the colony's own fathering pushed toward legal non-existence.

These are the costs the order chose, and they are grave, and nothing that follows diminishes them. But they must be given their actual scale, which is the scale of a small, cheap colony held for fifty years — hundreds killed by the direct violence of administration, thousands of soldiers spent in wars, a plateau's land taken, a people kept unlettered. Grave, deliberate, and — set against the third column — smaller than the thing nobody decided.

The second column: what was built

Now the built thing, which the study will not pretend away, because a grim accounting that records only the harm is as false as one that records only the achievement.

Italy built Eritrea into the shape of a country. It drew the borders that are still the borders; it made, out of a shatter zone that had never been a single polity, a bounded territory with

a name — a name Italy coined from the Greek for the Red Sea, now the name of a sovereign nation. It built a capital: Asmara, raised from a cluster of villages into a planned city, and built up in the 1930s into one of the most remarkable concentrations of modernist architecture anywhere in the world, a city so complete and so coherent that it is now inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the first such listing for a piece of colonial urbanism precisely because of what was built there. It built a railway up the escarpment from Massawa to Asmara and beyond, and a cableway, and roads, and a port. It seeded an industrial base and an administrative apparatus and a body of trained soldiers, clerks, and mechanics that made Eritrea, at independence, one of the more developed territories of its region.

None of this was built for the Eritrean, and that qualification is essential and has been the burden of the whole study: the city had a quarter he could not live in, the school a grade he could not pass, the army a rank he could not reach. The infrastructure was built to hold and to extract, and the Eritrean was its labour, not its beneficiary. And yet the roads are real roads and the city is a real city, and both outlived the order that made them and passed to the people the order excluded, who now hold them as their own. This is the genuine difficulty of the second column, and the study does not resolve it, because it does not resolve: the achievement is real and the exclusion is real, and the one does not cancel the other. A thing can be both a monument and a wound, and Asmara is both — a beautiful city built by a racial order for a population that was barred from its heart, and now the capital of the descendants of the barred, who love it because it is theirs and it is beautiful, and in whom the two facts coexist without difficulty because that is how inherited things are.

The third column: the note no one meant to call

And now the largest column, the one this study has held in reserve since its opening landscape, and it must be laid out carefully, because its gravity and its innocence are both real and the honesty of the whole accounting depends on holding them together.

In 1887, cattle were imported through Massawa to feed the Italian troops massing on the coast. The cattle carried rinderpest — cattle plague, a viral disease of ruminants that had long existed in Asia and Europe but had, in the scholarly judgement, never before reached the interior of sub-Saharan Africa. It reached it now, through the port Italy had occupied, in the animals Italy had brought. And it went off like a bomb in a population with no

immunity and no buffer. The virus killed on the order of ninety per cent and more of the cattle of the Horn, and then it did not stop: it spread out of the Horn along the trade routes and the water-holes, eight thousand kilometres across the Sahel from Massawa to Dakar within three years, and south over the following decade to the Zambezi and beyond, until by the late 1890s it had crossed nearly the whole of the continent and killed the overwhelming majority of the cattle of Africa. It is remembered as the single greatest natural catastrophe in modern African history, and it began at the Italian port of Massawa.

The mechanism by which cattle death became human death is the metabolic mechanism exactly. A pastoral and agro-pastoral economy is a coordinated system for carrying a human population on the backs of its herds — the cattle are the capital, the plough-oxen, the milk, the meat, the store of wealth, the buffer against a bad harvest. Destroy ninety per cent of the cattle in a single season and you have not merely impoverished that population; you have called in the note that the whole coordinated system was carrying, and the note is paid in the only currency the calling leaves, which is death. Behind the cattle came the famine — the *Kefu Qen*, the evil days, the great Ethiopian famine of 1888 to 1892 — and behind the famine came the epidemics that follow starvation, and the human mortality across the Horn is estimated at up to a third of the population of Ethiopia, a figure that rests on no census and can only be an order of magnitude but that dwarfs, by orders of magnitude, everything in the first column of this accounting. And the debt kept compounding after the dying: the loss of the cattle that had kept the bush grazed down let the land itself change, grass giving way to thornbush, and the thornbush was the habitat of the tsetse fly, which spread into country it had never held and brought sleeping sickness to people and animals that had been free of it — a second metabolic note, called by the first, generations long in the paying.

Now hold the two things that are both true. This was catastrophic beyond anything Italy decided, and Italy did not decide it. No one imported those cattle in order to kill a third of Ethiopia; they were brought to feed soldiers, and the plague they carried was invisible and unintended, as the smallpox that emptied the Americas was carried in the bodies and blankets of men who did not know what they carried and could not have engineered it if they had tried. The African communities that lived through the panzootic often believed it *had* been deliberate — that the Europeans had loosed the plague on purpose to break the pastoral economies and clear the land — and the belief was reasonable, because the

effect was so total and so perfectly aligned with the conqueror's interest that design was the natural inference; but the scholarship does not support it, and this study will not assert it, because the evidence is that this was consequence and not policy. And that is exactly what makes it the gravest entry in the ledger and the hardest to hold. The worst thing that came to the Horn in the age of the Italian conquest was not in the first column at all. It was not chosen, not aimed, not administered. It rode in on the hooves of the garrison's dinner, and it killed more people than every deliberate act of the colony put together, many times over.

The honest accounting must therefore do something uncomfortable: it must record the largest harm of the conquest as a harm the conquest caused but did not intend, and refuse both of the easy moves. It must refuse to let the innocence of the intention shrink the size of the harm — a third of a population is dead whether or not anyone willed it, and the conquest's presence is why the plague arrived, so the conquest owns the consequence even without the intent. And it must refuse to let the size of the harm manufacture an intention that was not there — to fold the rinderpest into the first column, to call it policy, is to tell a lie about how the worst thing happened, and the study's whole method forbids trading a true account for a more damning one. The debt was real, it was enormous, it was called by the conquest, and no one meant to call it. All four of those are true at once, and the accounting that cannot hold all four is not grim enough; it is merely partisan.

What time does to all three columns

There is a last operation in the grim accounting, and it is the one the module is finally named for, because it is what makes the accounting necessary at all.

Time launders the violence. An order that holds long enough stops being experienced as an order that was imposed and starts being experienced as simply the way the world is — the borders become the country's real borders, the city becomes the nation's beloved capital, the soldiers become the grandfathers whose service is a family's pride, and the founding violence recedes into a past that no longer feels connected to the present arrangement. This is the same process this study named at its very opening, when it observed that the native Solomonic order Italy met had itself been a conquest once, so thoroughly naturalised over a millennium that no Ethiopian experienced the descent-from-Solomon as a policy rather than as the ground of the world. The observation cuts

both ways, and now it cuts toward the colonial order and its afterlife. Italian Eritrea, too, is becoming the way the world is. The borders it drew are defended now as the homeland's own; the city it built is loved and protected as a national treasure; the *ascari* who died holding it for a foreign empire are commemorated with a complicated pride; and the famine that killed a third of the region, the expropriations, the capped schools, the criminalised children — these are not what the name "Eritrea" evokes to most who bear it. The arrangement took. The violence that made it is passing, as all founding violence passes given enough time, into the furniture of reality.

And this is precisely why the accounting has to be kept, and kept in all three columns, and kept without letting any of them cancel the others. Not to indict the nation that inherited the arrangement — the nation is real and its people's love of their city and their borders is as authentic as any people's love of any homeland, and naming the conquered origin of a thing is never the same as debunking the thing. But because the laundering, left to run, erases the one piece of knowledge the whole of this project exists to preserve: that the arrangement was made, that it was made by force and fiction and not by nature, and that the people who paid for it — the hundreds killed by policy, the thousands spent in the wars, and above all the uncountable dead of the note no one meant to call — were real people who paid a real price, and are owed, at the minimum, the accuracy of being counted in the ledger of how their world came to be the way it is. The grim accounting is the refusal to let time finish laundering the violence into inevitability. It does not un-launder it; the arrangement is real and will stay real. It only insists, against the current of forgetting, that it was built, and at what cost, and by whom, and to whom the cost was charged.

Reading the grim accounting against the framework

Three findings, and the third is the revision.

One: the accounting must be kept in separate columns, and the deliberate harm is not the largest. The study's method is to lay out the arithmetic and leave the sum, and here that means recording three distinct kinds of cost — the harm the order chose, the goods it built, and the catastrophe it caused without choosing — and refusing to collapse them. The finding that falls out of keeping them separate is one a single-column accounting would miss entirely: that the gravest harm of this conquest, by orders of magnitude, was not in the column of things the conquest decided. The deliberate violence

of Italian Eritrea was real and grave and it was measured in hundreds and thousands; the metabolic catastrophe the conquest set off was measured in a fraction of a whole population. An accounting that indexes a conquest only by its intended cruelty will therefore systematically undercount its actual harm, because the largest harm is often the one nobody intended.

Two: the metabolic debt is a distinct category of colonial harm — the unintended catastrophe — and it obeys the same logic as the Columbian dying. The Field Manual should carry a standing column for the harm a conquest causes without deciding it: the pathogen introduced, the herd or the crop or the ecology disrupted, the note called in on a coordinated system that had carried a population above its bare subsistence base until the conquest's arrival knocked the coordination out. This is not the extraction and it is not the suppression; it is the consequence, and it is graded not by the conqueror's malice but by the biological and ecological vulnerability of what he arrived into. Where he arrives into a population with no immunity to what he carries — the Americas and smallpox, the Horn and rinderpest — the unintended column can dwarf every intended one. The tell of this category is that the victims often believe it was deliberate, because the harm is so total and so convenient that design is the natural inference; and the discipline is to record the enormity of the harm while declining the inference the evidence does not support, holding that a thing can be both catastrophic and unintended, and that the conquest owns the consequence of its presence without having authored the catastrophe.

Three — the revision: naturalisation is not only how an order is built but how its costs are forgotten, and the grim accounting is the countermeasure the framework requires. This study began by using naturalisation to explain how an order comes to run cheaply — how a built arrangement becomes, over generations, the unquestioned furniture of reality, so that the governed hold it up themselves without experiencing it as a thing that was imposed. This module shows the same process performing a second function that the framework has not named: it launders the costs. The identical mechanism that converts a conquest into "just the way the world is" also converts the conquest's dead into a past that no longer seems connected to the present arrangement — the borders become natural, the city becomes beloved, the founding violence becomes history rather than structure. So naturalisation is not only the engine of cheap rule; it is the engine of forgetting, and the two are the same engine, because to experience the arrangement as natural is precisely to stop experiencing its origin as a cost

that was charged to someone. The framework should therefore state that every naturalised order carries an unpaid ledger beneath its sense of inevitability, and that the specific work of the grim accounting — the reason the method exists — is to keep that ledger legible against the current of a forgetting that is not incidental but structural, the same structural process that made the order cheap in the first place. An order becomes the furniture of reality by making its subjects forget it was built; the grim accounting is the discipline of remembering, in three honest columns, that it was.

The colony killed by policy, and the policy is counted. It built a country and a beautiful city, and the building is counted. And it called, without meaning to, a metabolic note that killed a third of a region and changed the land for generations, and that is counted too, in its own column, at its true and terrible size, with its true and unsettling innocence intact. Time is turning all three into the way the world is. The accounting is the refusal to let it — not to unmake the arrangement, which is real and is Eritrea, but to keep the receipt for how it was made, and to whom the cost was charged, and how much of the worst of it was a debt that no one, in the end, ever meant to call.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this module; it gathers and totals material established with its sources in the earlier modules of this study, and the one new body of evidence — the rinderpest panzootic — is drawn from modern scholarship and is paraphrased throughout.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For the rinderpest panzootic of 1888–1897 — its introduction through Massawa in 1887 in cattle imported to feed Italian troops, its unprecedented reach into sub-Saharan Africa, the 90-per-cent-plus cattle mortality, the 8,000-kilometre spread from Massawa to Dakar within three years and the continental spread over the following decade, the resulting *Kefu Qen* famine and human mortality estimated at up to a third of Ethiopia's population, the ecological cascade from grassland to thornbush and the consequent expansion of tsetse and sleeping sickness, and the African communities' widespread belief that the plague had been deliberately introduced (a belief the scholarship does not support): Thaddeus Sunseri, "The African Rinderpest Panzootic, 1888–1897" (Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History, 2018); the veterinary-historical literature on rinderpest and its eradication (Morens and colleagues; McVety, *The Rinderpest Campaigns*); and the oral-

historical literature on the Horn (the Borana Oromo *Ciinna* narrations). For Asmara's modernist architecture and its 2017 inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site: the UNESCO listing and the architectural literature on "Asmara: A Modernist African City." For the built infrastructure, the railway and cableway, and Eritrea's relative development at mid-century: the standard economic histories drawn on in the earlier modules of this study (Jerven, Strangio and Weisdorf; Podestà; Negash). The deliberate-harm column gathers findings established with their full sources in the preceding modules and is not re-cited here.

Contested figures, given as ranges. The rinderpest cattle mortality is given at "ninety per cent and more," with some regional figures higher; the human mortality of the *Kefu Qen* at "up to a third" of Ethiopia's population, an order of magnitude resting on no census and stated as such. The attribution of the panzootic's introduction to Italian-imported cattle at Massawa in 1887 is the standard scholarly account and is widely accepted, but the ultimate origin of the infected animals (variously given as from Asia, from India via Aden, or from the Black Sea region) is not certain, and the attribution is given as established-but-not-absolute, consistent with this study's treatment of it in the earlier modules as attributed rather than proven at the level of the specific animals. The deliberate-harm figures — killings, hectares expropriated, war dead at Adwa, Libya, Somalia and Keren — are given as in the modules where they were established, each as a range. The point that the unintended metabolic harm exceeded the intended harm by orders of magnitude is robust across any plausible values of the contested figures and does not depend on resolving them.

MODULE 12

THE BORDER THAT BECAME A NATION

The close — what Eritrea shares with every conquest in the collection and what was singular to it; and then the strongest case anyone can make for this colony, stated at its full strength and answered without flinching: that Italy, whatever its cruelty, made a nation where there had been only a shatter zone, drew the border inside which a distinct people came to know itself, and that the sovereign Eritrea of today is the colony's own child — a claim to be credited in full without swallowing the self-justification folded inside it, and a cost to be named in full without pretending the achievement away.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

What converged

Set Italian Eritrea beside the other conquests in this collection and most of its machinery is the common machinery, working the way the framework says it works everywhere. The convergences are worth naming, because they are the evidence that the pattern is a pattern and not a story told about one place.

Beneath the colony was a floor of force, and the floor came first; the belief was cut to fit the floor, not the reverse. The floor was held cheaply, through intermediaries the order rented rather than through an occupying mass — the chiefs confirmed in office by an Italian councillor, the bought bands, the Residents. The legitimating story was a fiction in the exact technical sense — a claim the order needed to be believed and that was not true — and it was aimed at the audience whose belief the order actually required, which was never the conquered but the metropole that paid. The native order the conquest displaced was itself a former conquest, naturalised over centuries until its conquered origin had vanished into the way the world simply was. The settlement ran through a legal instrument that declared the land the state's by the oldest fiction in colonial law, that ground without a recognised title is ground owned by no one. The extraction was sorted by caste. The information the order managed was managed to keep two ends of a seam

from meeting. The elite above the common man coordinated by interlocking self-interest and fractured where a man of standing was cut out of the take. The subject had no liberty because he had no faction to win one. And the order changed not when the ruled rose but when an outside power broke the floor. All of that is the collection's ordinary findings, confirmed once more. Eritrea is, in its bones, a conquest like the others, and the framework reads it without strain.

What diverged

But every case in this collection bends the common pattern in its own direction, and Eritrea's divergences are sharp enough that they have driven a revision back into the framework at nearly every module. Gather them, because together they are the portrait of what made this colony singular.

It was a colony whose floor was rented almost entirely from the conquered — nine-tenths of the men under arms were Eritrean — so that co-optation was not a technique laid over the floor but was the floor itself, and the colony held a country of eighty-five thousand square kilometres from three towns with a few thousand troops most of whom were drawn from the country they held. It was a colony that produced nothing worth extracting and ran at a loss for fifty years, so that its true export was not a crop or a mineral but its men, recruited to hold it and then spent conquering elsewhere — the only crop that paid was the soldier, and he was paid for in lire and in graves. It was a colony that met, across its southern border, not a fragmented order it could rent piecemeal but a fused one it could not — the Solomonic empire of Ethiopia, a former conquest naturalised to the point where its every prince defended the whole as his own, which is why the same recursion that made the Eritrean march cheap made Ethiopia unconquerable, and why this is the one study in the collection where the native order destroyed the coloniser's army in the field. It was a colony whose robe had to absorb that defeat and did — metabolising a rout by the people it claimed to be civilising into a reason to stay rather than a refutation of the right to rule. It was a colony that withheld formation so completely that it left no graduates, and thereby left the thousand-year-old formation it declined to compete with in full possession of the highland's soul. And it was a colony whose gravest harm was not in its ledger of decisions at all — the metabolic catastrophe of the rinderpest, carried in unintended and killing a third of a region, a debt

no one meant to call, larger by orders of magnitude than everything the colony chose to do.

These are the divergences, and each was earned against the sources rather than assumed. But they are not the hardest thing the study has to end on. The hardest thing is a single claim that gathers several of them and turns them, with real force, into a case *for* the conquest — and the discipline of this collection requires that the study end there, on the strongest version of the position it is most tempted to dismiss, stated fully and answered without flinching.

The strongest counter-position, stated at full strength

Here it is, put as well as its proponents put it, and they are serious people with a serious argument and a nation's lived experience behind them.

Before Italy came, there was no Eritrea. The name did not exist; Italy coined it. The thing the name describes did not exist either — the territory was a shatter zone, the frayed edge where four empires had ground against each other and none had held, a strip of highland and coast and desert with no common government, no common capital, no shared political life, divided down the middle by faith and split into nine peoples speaking languages from three unrelated families. There had never been a single polity there. What there had been was a march: the northern frontier of Ethiopia, the southern frontier of the Ottoman coast, a borderland belonging to everyone's edge and no one's centre.

Italy drew a line around that march and gave it a name, a capital, a border, an administration, a currency, a railway, and fifty years of shared experience inside a single frame. And inside that frame, over those fifty years and the decades of struggle that followed, something came into being that had not been there before: an Eritrean people, conscious of itself as distinct — distinct above all from Ethiopia, the great neighbour to the south with which it shares its largest language, its highland church, and much of its blood. That consciousness was real enough to sustain a thirty-year war of independence, one of the longest in modern African history; real enough that in 1993, in an internationally monitored referendum, the people inside Italy's old border voted all but unanimously for a sovereignty defined by that border; real enough to be, today, a flag at the United Nations and a nation that the people who bear its name love and defend as their own. And the serious scholarly version of the claim goes further and says the quiet

part plainly: that the historical legitimacy of the Eritrean state rests on the founding role of the colonial experience — that without the Italian colony there is no Eritrean nation, only a set of Ethiopian and Sudanese borderlands, and that to deny the colony its founding role is, in effect, to deny Eritrea its right to exist. On this telling the conquest was not only a crime. It was a genesis. The border became a nation, and the nation is real, and it is good that it exists, and Italy made the border.

That is the counter-position at its full strength, and it is not a straw man and it will not be treated as one. It is true in every particular of fact. Italy did coin the name. There was no prior Eritrean polity. The border did become a nation. The nation is real and beloved and sovereign. And the consciousness that fills it did, in substantial part, form inside the frame the conquest drew. Every clause of that is correct, and the study concedes all of it without reservation, because the method of this collection is to lay out the arithmetic honestly and a dishonest subtraction here would poison everything.

The answer, without flinching

And now the answer, which is not a denial of any of it but a refusal of the thing folded inside it.

Grant the whole of the achievement. A nation exists that would not otherwise exist; its people are glad it exists; the border that Italy drew is the border they chose in 1993 and defend today. All true. The question the counter-position invites you to skip is the one this whole study has been built to keep in view: *at what price, charged to whom, and does the achievement retroactively license the price?* And the answer to the last part is no — not because the achievement is not real, but because the logic that says it does is the exact logic of every conqueror in this collection, the self-justification that the study's method exists to name and refuse.

Consider what the retroactive licence would prove if it proved anything. Every durable conquest, given enough time, becomes the furniture of somebody's reality and is loved by the descendants of the conquered as their own world — that is not the exception to conquest but its endpoint, the naturalisation this study has traced from its first page. The Solomonic empire that Italy failed to conquer was itself a conquest once, and by the nineteenth century it was the beloved and sacred world of the people it had once been imposed upon; the Islamic coast was a conquest once; Roman Gaul was a conquest once,

until the Gauls were simply Romans and glad of it. If the fact that a conquest's descendants come to cherish what it made were a licence for the conquest, then every conquest ever committed is licensed the moment its victims' grandchildren stop grieving — which is to say, the licence is automatic, universal, and therefore worth nothing as a moral judgement, because it acquits everyone. A test that everything passes is not a test. The love of the Eritrean for Eritrea is real and is not in question; what is in question is whether that love, arriving two generations after the founding, reaches back and settles the account of the founding, and it cannot, because if it could it would settle every account ever opened, and the ledger this study keeps would be a blank page.

So the two things stand, and the study's final discipline is to hold them both without letting either dissolve the other. The achievement is real: a nation was made, and it is good that it exists, and Italy's border is its cradle. The cost was real: the hundreds killed by policy, the plateau taken while its owners starved, the school capped so a people stayed unlettered, the men spent in other men's wars, the category of children legislated toward erasure, and beneath all of it the third of a region dead of a plague the conquest carried in — and none of that was redeemed in advance by a nationhood that no one who paid those costs lived to see or chose. The Eritrean who died at Adwa holding Italy's line did not die for Eritrea; there was no Eritrea to die for, and he was spent by the men who would later coin the name. The peasant who came back from the famine to find his field was Crown land did not lose it for a future flag. To say the nation justifies the conquest is to conscript all of them, retroactively, into a project none of them consented to and most of them never heard of — which is the final and most elegant form of the same use to which the conquest put them while they lived: as instruments of a purpose that was not theirs.

The honest close is therefore not a verdict but a refusal to collapse the two truths into one. Italy made Eritrea, and the making was a genuine gift that the makers did not intend as a gift and mostly did not intend at all — the nation is, in the deepest sense, an unintended consequence, like the plague, though a benign one, a thing that fell out of the conquest's frame rather than a thing the conquest was for. And the price of that unintended gift was paid, in full and in advance, by people who got nothing from it, because they were dead or dispossessed before the gift existed. A nation can be real, and beloved, and worth having, and still have been bought at a price its purchasers never agreed to pay and never saw repaid. That is not a paradox to be resolved. It is the shape of

almost every nation on earth, and the reason this collection exists is that the shape is so easily forgotten — laundered, over generations, into a story in which the nation was always meant to be and the price was always worth it and the conquest, in the fullness of time, comes out ahead.

It does not come out ahead. It comes out as what it was: a floor of force that held a shatter zone for fifty years, extracted its men, withheld its schooling, carried in its plague, and drew, incidentally and without meaning to, a line inside which a people it never valued would one day become a nation it never imagined and would not have permitted. That the line became a nation is the best thing that can be said of the conquest, and it is a true thing, and it is said here in full. That the nation redeems the conquest is the best thing the conquest can say of itself, and it is a false thing, and it is refused here in full. Both, together, without flinching, is the whole of the grim accounting — and the whole of what it means to hold an order as tested, and never revealed.

Reading convergence and divergence against the framework

Three findings, and the third is the revision that closes the study.

One: the convergences confirm that the pattern is structural, and the divergences are all traceable to two variables this study isolated. Nearly everything singular about Italian Eritrea — the rented floor, the man-as-export, the failed settlement turned military reservoir, the impossibility of Ethiopia — traces to two things the conquest found rather than made: that it fell on a *fragmented* order whose belief was thickly installed but misaligned with its floor, which made the conquered cheap to rent and impossible to convert; and that its own metropole was too poor and too little formed to fund either a settler mass or a believed robe, which forced it to hold the colony by the wage rather than the belief. Give the framework those two dials — the fusion of the native order and the depth of the metropole's purse and conviction — and the whole of Eritrea's divergence from the pattern falls out of them. The case teaches that a colony's specific shape is not chosen by the coloniser from a menu but is largely set, in advance, by what he finds and what he brings.

Two: the founding of a nation can be an unintended consequence of a conquest, and belongs in the same category as the conquest's unintended catastrophes. This study named the rinderpest as a harm the conquest caused without deciding — a note

called by the conquest's mere presence rather than its policy. Eritrean nationhood is the same category with the sign reversed: a good the conquest produced without deciding, a thing that fell out of the frame it drew for entirely other reasons. The Field Manual should carry this symmetry. A conquest's largest effects, for good and for ill, are frequently the ones it did not intend — the plague it carried and the nation it accidentally framed — and an accounting that credits or debits a conquest only by its intentions will misjudge it in both directions, undercounting the catastrophe it did not mean to cause and overcounting the credit for the nation it did not mean to make.

Three — the revision, and the study's last word: the naturalisation that makes an order cheap and launders its costs also generates the strongest argument in its favour, and that argument must be met on its own ground rather than dismissed. The framework has treated naturalisation as the engine of cheap rule and, in the grim accounting, as the engine of forgetting. This closing module finds it performing a third and subtler work: it manufactures legitimacy retroactively, by making the order's descendants love what it built, and then offers that love as a licence for the founding. This is the most sophisticated defence a conquest ever generates, because it is not a lie — the love is real, the nation is real, the achievement is real — and it cannot be answered by disputing its facts. It can be answered only by naming the move it makes: the substitution of a real later good, cherished by people who did not pay for it, for a real earlier cost, paid by people who got nothing. The framework should therefore equip the reader not to deny that conquests build beloved things — they do, that is their endpoint — but to refuse the inference from *beloved* to *justified*, on the ground that the inference acquits every conquest in history the moment its victims' grandchildren are content, and a justification available to all is a justification worth nothing. The strongest case for any conquest is the nation or the peace or the order it eventually became; the answer, every time, is that eventually is not the same as therefore, and that the people who paid the price are owed the ledger kept open, against the current of a forgetting that would close it in the conqueror's favour.

Italy drew a border, and the border became a nation, and the nation is real and good and its people's own. Italy also killed by policy, took the land, withheld the school, spent the men, erased the children, and carried in the plague that emptied the highland — and the nation redeems none of it, because the nation was bought with a price its purchasers never agreed to pay and did not live to be repaid. Both are true. Holding both, without letting

the achievement launder the cost or the cost deny the achievement, is the whole of what this study was for. The order was built. It became real. That it became real does not make the building innocent; it makes it a thing that was built, at a price, and then became the way the world is. The grim accounting is the receipt, kept open. This is where it closes.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this closing module, which gathers and weighs findings established with their full sources across the preceding eleven modules and the opening landscape of this study.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For the central debate on which the counter-position turns — whether Italian colonialism was a marginal accident in the long history of the region or the substantial founding rupture from which Eritrean nationhood derives, and the explicit connection of that debate to the historical and political legitimacy of the Eritrean state — the scholarly literature on colonialism and the construction of Eritrean national identity (Uoldelul Chelati Dirar and the associated historiography), which frames the two positions and their political stakes and is the direct source for the counter-position as stated here. For the character of the pre-colonial territory as a shatter zone of competing empires with no prior single polity, and for the nine peoples and the confessional division: the reference literature drawn on in the opening landscape of this study. For the coining of the name from the Greek and the delineation of the border by Italo-Ethiopian agreement: the standard accounts used earlier in this study. For the thirty-year war of independence, the 1993 internationally monitored referendum and its near-unanimous result, and Eritrea's admission to the United Nations: the standard reference accounts of Eritrean independence. The two isolated variables offered in the closing findings — the fusion of the native order and the depth of the metropole's purse and conviction — are this study's own synthesis across its modules, not a claim attributed to any single scholar.

Contested figures, given as ranges. The referendum result is given as "all but unanimous"; the reported figure is approximately 99.8 per cent of some 1.1 million votes cast for independence in April 1993. The war of independence is given as "thirty years," the conventional figure dating its opening to the early 1960s. All figures gathered from the preceding modules — the war dead, the expropriated hectares, the famine mortality, the settler and native populations — are carried at the ranges established in those modules

and are not re-stated here. The judgement that the unintended effects of the conquest, the rinderpest catastrophe and the accidental framing of a nation alike, exceeded its intended effects is this study's, and is offered as the considered conclusion of the whole accounting rather than as a figure to be sourced.